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**Volume 2 – Participatory Poverty**  
**Assessment**

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**COUNTRY POVERTY ASSESSMENT – DOMINICA**

**Dominica: Reducing Poverty in the Face of Vulnerability**

# **COUNTRY POVERTY ASSESSMENT**

## **DOMINICA**

### **VOLUME 2**

### **PARTICIPATORY POVERTY ASSESSMENT**

**Submitted to:**

**THE CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

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**In collaboration with the**  
**NATIONAL ASSESSMENT TEAM OF DOMINICA**

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## **PART I: FOCUS GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL DISCUSSIONS, AND COMMUNITY MEETINGS**

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## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

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Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) are now seen as an essential component of any research to determine the type and level of poverty and deprivation in a country. Participatory approaches are contextual and they not only emphasize people's ability to analyse their own reality but they help us to understand reality at the local community level through the eyes of community residents.

The PPA conducted in Dominica strengthened the poverty assessment process by increasing stakeholder involvement, generating a large amount of qualitative data to complement the quantitative data produced by the Survey of Living Conditions/Household Budgetary Survey (SLC/HBS), enriching the analysis, and deepening understanding of poverty from the perspective of the poor.

It was conducted in twelve communities. It provided opportunities for people in these communities to participate in a number of activities within and through which they articulated and shared their perceptions and experience of poverty and deprivation, reflected on and analysed the conditions under which they live, identified the strategies that they use to sustain their livelihoods, and articulated their concerns, needs and priorities. The data generated and produced by these processes have provided insights into the effects and impact of poverty on poor individuals, households and groups living in the communities studied.

### 1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE PPA

---

The **General Objectives** of the PPA were to:

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

The **Specific Objectives** were to:

1. Collect concrete and specific data on living conditions in the communities in order to produce a multi-dimensional view of poverty and deprivation, its distribution and the factors that contribute its existence;

2. Increase understanding of poverty and deprivation based on the perceptions and experience of individuals, of households, and of different groups in the communities selected for study;
3. Identify the vulnerability and risks faced by poor individuals and households as they strive to sustain their livelihoods;
4. Identify assets, resources, facilities, and services to which poor individuals, households and groups have access;
5. Obtain information from individuals, groups and households about:
  - a. The initiatives that they take to sustain their livelihoods,
  - b. The constraints and obstacles that they encounter in their attempts to access available resources, facilities and services,
  - c. Their concerns, needs and priorities, and
  - d. The interventions and actions that in their view are needed in order to improve their living conditions and to alleviate and reduce poverty and deprivation; and
6. Generate data that can be used to formulate pro-poor policies that are informed by the voices of the poor.

## **1.2 COMPONENTS OF THE PPA**

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In order to achieve these objectives and as can be seen in figure 1.1, the PPA comprised four main components, in each of which a number of separate but related activities were undertaken.

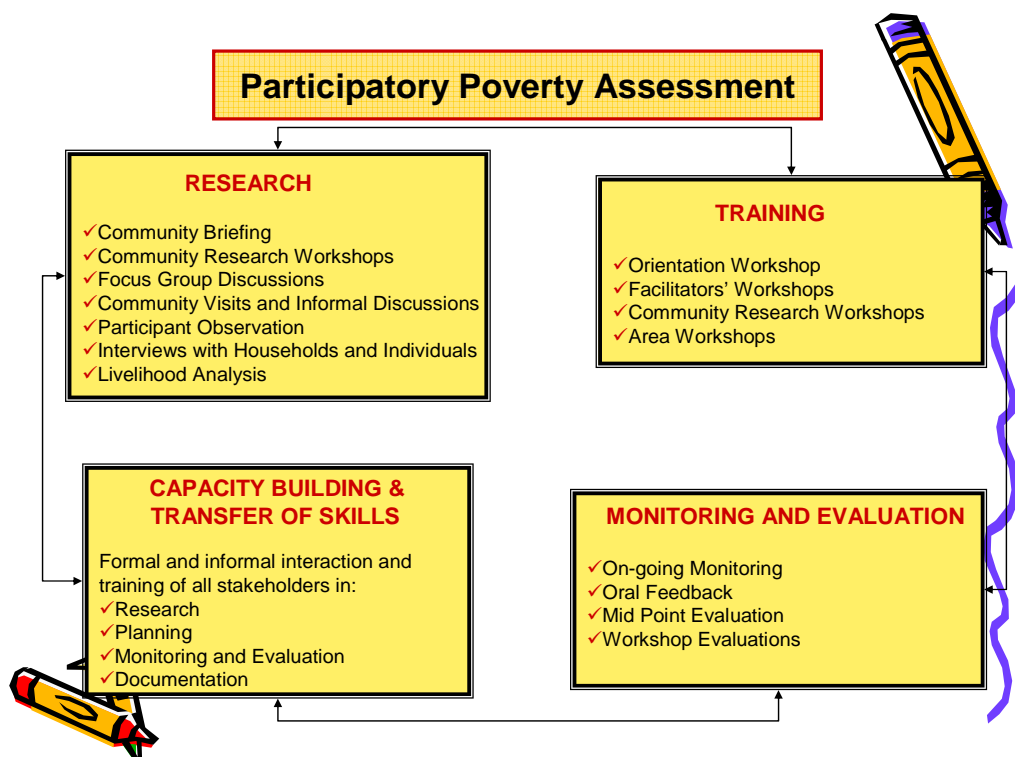


Figure 1.1: Components of the PPA

### 1.2.1 RESEARCH

The research component was undertaken to:

- Generate specific and concrete qualitative as well as some quantitative data on living conditions in the selected communities;
- Obtain information from individuals, households and groups in these communities on their perceptions, experience, and views about poverty and deprivation and the impact on their lives;
- Identify factors that contribute to poverty and deprivation in these communities

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

### **1.2.2 TRAINING**

---

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

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

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

### **1.2.3 CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRANSFER OF SKILLS**

---

An important goal of the Country Poverty Assessment was to transfer skills and build the capacity of institutions, organisations, groups and individuals so that they would be able to undertake and successfully carry out CPAs in the future.

Within the PPA, directly through training workshops and indirectly through informal interaction and communication, deliberate attempts were made to transfer knowledge and skills to the Field Research Facilitators and to other organisations represented on the PPA sub-committee, and to help them to acquire additional, new and specific skills needed to conduct PPAs.

## 1.2.4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

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

During the two-day mid-term evaluation workshop Field Research Facilitators were exposed to monitoring and evaluation techniques, assessed progress of the field work, identified challenges, constraints and problems being faced, discussed strategies for dealing with these, and made plans for completion of the field work.

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

## 1.3 METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

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### 1.3.1 THE APPROACH

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A participatory research approach and methodology was used to engage community residents, Field Research Facilitators, members of the National Assistance Team (NAT) and the Consultants in the various activities that were undertaken in the PPA. Teams of Field Research Facilitators and some members of the NAT were trained in the use of the participatory research methods and techniques that were used to collect and generate large amounts of mostly qualitative data.

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

Workshops and focus group discussions conducted in all of the communities were vehicles for obtaining specific information from residents about life in their communities. Their voices were heard and quotations of their actual words are used in the report, to highlight their experience of being poor and of living in poverty as well as to ensure that the report reflects their perspectives. At the same time, participation in the workshops also exposed residents to training in the use of participatory research methods and techniques, and provided them with opportunities to acquire skills in data collection, analysis and interpretation of the information that they provided about their communities.

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

### **1.3.2 CHALLENGES, CONSTRAINTS AND PROBLEMS**

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The use of the participatory methodology presented the Field Research Facilitators with several challenges and constraints that affected their ability to conduct and complete the field work in the time expected. Unfamiliarity with the approach was at first a limitation, but with ongoing training and support from the Coordinator they were able to conduct the PPA activities with some degree of success.

At the same time many of the community residents, especially those in communities that were studied in the last CPA were sceptical about becoming involved since in their view nothing had happened since the last poverty study, and no action had been taken to improve their situation. In addition, because of unfamiliarity with this approach and methodology, and concern about how the information they provided would be used, some residents were reluctant to participate. As a result in their attempts to mobilise residents, some Research Facilitators were faced with many problems and this was responsible for some of the small numbers that participated in some of the activities.

In spite of these constraints the use of this methodology did generate a significant amount of qualitative data that have been used to produce this report.

### **1.3.3 THE KEY INFORMANTS**

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#### **1.3.3.1 Selecting the Key Informants**

A combination of hierarchical, phased, purposive/selective sampling, and self-selection was used to identify key informants including poor communities, households, groups and individuals.

#### **1.3.3.2 Hierarchical Sampling**

Because it was necessary to obtain information from households and from individuals at different levels in the communities, hierarchical sampling was used to identify the units to be studied. Selection criteria were developed for the types of individuals and households from which information would be sought and these criteria were used to identify the specific individuals and households that would be interviewed.

#### **1.3.3.3 Phased Sampling**

Phased sampling was used to identify communities that were representative of those in the country in terms of demography, economic activity and social milieu, as well as the various types, degree and severity of poverty and of its distribution within the communities. Data from the last census, information from key government ministries and from NGOs working in the communities, and from written reports and other documents were used to identify possible communities in which the PPA activities could be carried out. A list of characteristics and criteria was then developed and used to select twelve of the poorest communities in Dominica that were to be studied.

#### **1.3.3.4 Purposive and Selective Sampling**

Because data were to be collected from specific units and from people within those units, selection had to be carefully done rather than left to chance. As a result specific criteria were developed and used to identify and select units and individuals that would provide data needed to achieve the objectives of the PPA as well as those of the CPA. Households, community leaders and very poor individuals were selected by this method.

#### **1.3.3.5 Self Selection**

This technique was used to ensure that as many residents as possible and as were interested participated in the focus group discussions and in the community workshops. All residents were invited to participate in these activities so as to obtain information

from as many of them as possible and to get their perspectives on life and living conditions in their communities.

### 1.3.4 DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

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Face-to-face interaction and ongoing dialogue with the key informants were key elements in the data collection process, and various methods and techniques were used to ensure the active involvement of all stakeholders in some aspect of the collection, analysis and interpretation of data.

Triangulation ensured the use of a number of different data sources and of data collection methods and techniques to obtain and check information given, to gain multiple perspectives of the experience and impact of poverty and deprivation, and to compare how different communities, households, groups and individuals perceived, experienced, and coped with poverty and deprivation and its impact on their lives.

#### 1.3.4.1 Data Collection

Several methods and techniques were used to collect a large amount of information from various sources including documents, individuals and groups. Among these were:

- ***Transect walks, observation and informal interaction and conversations with residents.*** In order to familiarize themselves with the communities, Field Research Facilitators went on walks in the communities, interacted and held conversations and informal discussions with residents, and observed life and living in the communities. They recorded their impressions and observations on a pre-prepared observation sheet.
- ***Observation Sheet.*** This was used by Field Research Facilitators to record their impressions and observations of different aspects of life in the communities. They recorded information about the physical features and infrastructure of the community, the population, economic activity, social interaction and relationships, level of wealth and poverty, and social and environmental problems.
- ***Interviews.*** Interviews were conducted with heads of households, community leaders and poor individuals. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to conduct in-depth interviews with thirty-nine heads of households and/or other adults. During the interviews with heads of households important information was obtained about the interviewee as well as about other household members. Each interview lasted for about one and a half to two hours and provided, among other things, information about household structure, composition, assets and resources,

household economies, intra-household relations, and the health status of household members.

- In-depth interviews that extended over several hours were also conducted with a small number of individuals in some of the communities. A set of criteria were developed and used as the basis of a purposive sampling technique to select individuals who were experiencing extreme poverty. Among those selected were the hidden poor, the destitute, and elderly persons living in poverty. These open-ended interviews were intended to provide information about and insights into the meaning and lived experience of poverty in the interviewees' lives. The aim was to obtain information that would answer the question of what it means to be poor and deprived, and what contributes to and perpetuates the reproduction of poverty over and across generations. The information obtained and the insights gained from these interviews were used to create the case studies included in the final report of the CPA.
- Community leaders/individuals with influence in each community were identified by the Field Research Facilitators and a shorter semi-structured interview schedule was used to conduct interviews with nine community leaders. These interviews provided an opportunity for the leaders to share their knowledge and views about poverty and its impact on different groups in the community, as well as on individual coping strategies and on community responses to poverty and poverty alleviation.
- **Focus Group Discussions.** A focus group discussion guide with questions about specific topics to be discussed was used to conduct discussions with separate groups of males, females, youth under 25 years of age, elderly persons, and unemployed persons. Participants in these discussions provided information and insights into how the group to which they belonged perceive, experience and were affected by poverty, and the strategies that they used to cope with it.
- **Community Workshops.** Community-based participatory research workshops were used as a mechanism simultaneously to obtain a large amount of data from several people. Through their participation in interactive exercises, in community resource mapping, in wealth ranking and in the use of creative tools like the wheel of well being and quality of life index, residents provided a great deal of information about life and living conditions in their communities and suggested actions that should be taken to improve these.

#### **1.3.4.2 Recording the Data**

Taking into consideration variations in ability of Field Research Facilitators, and because it was important to capture as many, if not all of the vies of residents and the points and issues they raised, Facilitators were given the option of using tape recorders or recording by hand. In order to ensure consistency and quality control, Field Research Facilitators were provided with guidelines that clearly identified how to record information from the focus group discussions and the community workshops, both by taking notes and by using tape recorders. They were also instructed and encouraged to include in their reports as many direct quotes as possible from those who participated in the focus discussions and workshops.

#### **1.3.4.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The large amount of data obtained from the various activities was analysed and interpreted at two levels. At the community level during the workshops, residents were engaged in analysing and interpreting the information that they had provided and that emerged out of the various workshop activities. In the process they engaged in collective analysis and reflection on the information that they had given, compared information provided and generated in the various activities, and identified trends, patterns, discrepancies, and contradictions in the information. As a result they gained new information about their communities, as well as new insights and a better understanding of the macro- and micro-level factors that had contributed to the level of poverty in their communities and determined the conditions in which they were living. In addition they made suggestions and recommendations on what could and should be done, including what they themselves could do to alleviate poverty and improve conditions under which they were living.

At another level the Consultants have used a variety of methods and techniques to analyse the data according to predetermined themes of poverty and deprivation, vulnerability, livelihood strategies, gender, and poverty alleviation. Among the methods and techniques used to analyse the data were content analysis, sorting and classification, contrasting contexts, causal analysis, needs analysis, trend analysis, gender analysis and comparative analysis, case analysis, deduction and generalization. Subjecting the data to such rigorous analyses has helped to verify and validate their objectivity, reliability, and credibility and to ensure that they provide a sound basis for targeting beneficiaries in future poverty alleviation and reduction policies and programmes.

The PPA was not only designed to focus on and identify factors that contribute to and/or perpetuate the existence of poverty, it also sought to generate information and to provide insights into key issues that emerge as a consequence of poverty and deprivation. Some of these issues like economic and social deprivation and vulnerability are both contributors to and consequences of poverty and this is evident from

information obtained from individuals and groups. Other issues like the availability and access to assets, resources, public facilities and services are often outside of the control of the poor and are determined by interventions of government and/or civil society organizations. Within the community workshops and during focus group discussions participants were able to reflect on such interventions and to discuss the extent to which they were achieving the goal of poverty alleviation.

At the same time because poverty is gendered, and men and women experience poverty and its effects differently, gender is also an important issue to be examined and addressed. This was done by conducting focus group discussions with same-sex groups, by disaggregating data by sex and by doing a gender analysis of the data collected.

### **1.3.5 MANAGING AND IMPLEMENTING THE PPA**

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

The team included:

- Members of the NAT sub-committee responsible for the PPA.
- The Project coordinator who was responsible for the day-to-day management of the CPA
- Field Research Facilitators who were responsible for collecting and accurately recording and reporting the information provided by community residents and whose role was critical in ensuring that the data were of the required amount and quality.
- Field Research Facilitators who were responsible for collecting and accurately recording and reporting the information provided by community residents and whose role was critical in ensuring that the data were of the required amount and quality.
- Community residents who participated in focus group discussions and community workshops and who provided information during interviews.

## 1.4 THE CONSULTANTS

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The PPA activities were carried in each community out by a team of two Field Research Facilitators who acted alternately as facilitators and recorders. However the completion of the PPA took a longer time than was originally expected. In some cases Research Facilitators encountered difficulties mobilizing and convincing community members to participate actively in the activities and to provide the required information. In some communities, especially in those that had participated in the previous Poverty Assessment, several residents voiced their frustration and scepticism about the lack of any action resulting from their participation in that and in similar activities. Some were also of the view that nothing different would happen as a result of this exercise. In spite of these sentiments, participation was generally good and many residents welcomed the chance to “have a voice” and to speak their minds about things that concerned them and that in their view, were important.

## 1.5 THE FINDINGS

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The information provided in this section of the report has emerged out of the actual lived experiences of people in twelve communities whose lives are characterised by poverty and deprivation. Their life stories give their perspective on poverty and describe their reality of being poor and of growing up and living in poor families and in poor communities. The stories they tell and their actual words reported in italics, provide us with insights into the underlying causes and factors that determine and perpetuate their impoverished circumstances, and they increase our understanding of their struggle to survive in spite of their feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness.

Qualitative data are subjective because they describe people’s experiences, feelings and views, but this does not make them less valid or reliable than quantitative data. Qualitative data are critical because they increase understanding of quantitative data and provide insights into the reality of people’s lives that quantitative data cannot provide. Qualitative data are also important because they provide specific information on and insights into the specific cultural contexts within which those being studied live and provide us with an understanding of the extent and the ways in which these contexts influence phenomena like wealth, poverty and deprivation. It is therefore important in interpreting the data presented here to give serious consideration to the specific context and to the local culture of the various communities, to the changes that have taken place over time in lifestyle, in changed expectations and consequently in the needs of community residents. This is especially important in the case of age, gender and disability.

The qualitative data provided by participants in the PPA activities must be used as the basis for developing pro-poor policies and targeting programmes that meet their needs. However, for poverty alleviation programmes to improve living conditions in impoverished communities and to alleviate and reduce poverty, they must be designed to respond to and meet the specific needs of poor individuals, households and groups in poor communities.

## 1.6 THE COMMUNITIES

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While the communities selected are some of the poorest in the country and while not every community in the country is poor, those that were studied are to some extent representative of all of the **types** of communities that exist in the country. They include urban and rural communities, isolated communities, large and small communities, farming communities, and communities whose residents work outside of their communities. At the same time while all of the communities selected for study exhibited some degree of poverty and deprivation, and share a number of characteristics, they are not homogeneous, and therefore their residents do not always experience or feel the effects of poverty and deprivation in the same way.

PPA activities conducted in the communities produced a great deal of information about the conditions under which residents are living, about their standard of living, and about their quality of life. While some of the information was obtained from documents and observation, most of it was provided by community leaders, and by residents who participated in the community workshops and focus group discussions.

### 1.6.1 THE COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

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The community workshops served as mechanisms to obtain specific information from community residents about life in their communities. They provided opportunities for residents to reflect on and to:

- Discuss living conditions in their communities,
- Discuss the quality of life and sense of well being they enjoy,
- Identify positive and negative features, and changes that have taken place in their communities over the last decade;
- Discuss availability and accessibility of facilities and services,
- Estimate the levels of poverty and wealth in their communities,

- Agree on their concerns and problems,
- Identify community needs, and
- Make recommendations for improving living conditions and reducing poverty in their communities.

Two hundred and eighty-four persons, nearly seventy-five per cent of whom were females, participated in the workshops in the twelve communities. They included young and elderly persons, parents and grandparents, married and single persons, persons with different levels of education and of different occupations, as well as unemployed persons.

Participation was generally high and community residents welcomed the opportunity to express their views. They not only described their reality and their experience of being poor and living in poverty, but emphasized their wish for their experience and perspectives to be taken into consideration in any attempt to understand and to alleviate poverty and deprivation.

While the primary goal of the workshops was to generate information on life and living conditions in the communities and while participants did generate large quantities of data, the workshops proved to be useful in other ways.

In evaluating the workshops participants identified several ways in which they had benefited from participating. Among these were:

- The sharing of information with other residents
  - "I learnt a lot by listening to other people."*
  - "It created togetherness."*
  - "Great success working and sharing information as a team."*
- Acquisition of new knowledge about their communities.
  - "Good, an eye opener."*
  - "Learnt new things about the community that we not aware of before."*
  - "It helped me to things I could not see before."*
  - "It allowed us to be more aware of the real situation and conditions under which we live."*
  - "Educated and informed me about my village and highlighted the problems and needs."*
  - "I am impressed with the amount of positive things we have in our community that we take for granted."*

- New understanding of the different dimensions of poverty.  
*"A view of all factors to rate conditions of a person's life."*  
*"It opened our eyes to reality."*  
*"The classifications of poverty were enlightening."*  
*"Poverty is not only people that have holes in their house, it's at all different levels."*
- Outcomes and impact of the workshops  
*"Topics, sessions and activities were interesting and educational."*  
*"This helped develop my mind."*  
*"We need more workshops like this one."*  
*"In the group work we were able to express our ideas and opinions."*

## SECTION 2: COMMUNITY PROFILES

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Several of the communities that were studied are made up of settlements and or small villages spread over a large physical space and linked by a network of roads and by common economic and social activities. Of the twelve communities studied, nine, the majority, are rural, one is urban, and two are suburban.

### 2.1 THE RURAL COMMUNITIES

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Many of these communities are coastal but they also stretch inland and are endowed with a large variety of natural marine and inland resources. A few have rivers running through them, and some are forested. Among other things their resources include marine reserves, sulphur springs, waterfalls, mangroves, nature trails and agricultural lands. Consequently their residents have access to resources that provide the basis for several economic activities including agriculture/farming, fishing and craft.

### 2.2 THE URBAN COMMUNITIES

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The three urban communities are comprised of “settlements” and this is evident along some streets in Roseau. In all of them there is evidence of squatting and slum-like conditions of poor housing, lack of amenities, poor sanitation, and they all display characteristics of urban ghettos, including the existence of gangs and of a drug trade and the use and abuse of illegal drugs. The populations of Silver Lake, Gutter and Tarish Pit are victims of Hurricanes David and Lenny. Victims of the former were allocated to barracks-type accommodation and over the years there has been severe deterioration in the physical infrastructure and in living conditions generally. Several people in these communities are experiencing severe poverty and some, among whom are homeless vagrants, are destitute.

Residents in most of the communities think that their communities are poor, and observations of living conditions and information provided by residents in the various PPA activities confirm this and show that some level of poverty does exist in all of the communities studied. However the data also show that there are severe levels of poverty in Silver Lake, in Gutter and Tarish Pit, in Dubic, and to some extent also in Roseau. The data also show that while some rural communities also exhibit several characteristics of poverty, when compared with urban and suburban, poverty is not only less severe in

rural than in urban communities, but the contributing factors are different from those in urban communities.

The population in all of the communities is a mixture of youth, middle-aged and elderly persons, but the population of Silver Lake is relatively young and there are a large number of children under twelve years of age. While the population of Penville comprises of more females than males and of younger persons, the opposite is true in Fabre/Fond St. Jean where there are more males than females. The population of the Carib Territory is mainly comprised of Kalinagos and it is being affected by the shifts that are taking place in other communities because of migration. However, there is concern about the practice of giving children in these communities up for adoption in the neighbouring French countries and sometimes in North America.

Migration has affected population in several communities. As a result of outmigration there has been a slight decrease in the population of Dubic, and in Soufriere/Scotts Head over the last six years there has been steady external migration to the USA and other Caribbean Islands as residents left to seek “greener pastures”. In Silver Lake, in Salisbury, and in Gutter and Tarish Pit several residents, including youth are migrating to other Caribbean islands and to the neighbouring French islands, and in Penville there is a trend of young people migrating to study and to explore better job opportunities. Roseau has been affected by internal as well as by external migration and displays some characteristics of a transient population.

As a result a significant segment of its population is comprised up of persons who have migrated from rural areas in search of jobs, and several of its residents have also migrated to neighbouring islands and to other more developed countries. There has also been some immigration of a small number of persons into Bellevue Chopin, but in Woodford Hill and Salisbury in-migration has resulted in the presence of a large number of Haitians working as farm labourers.

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

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### **2.3.1 THE PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL DIMENSION**

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The physical and material dimension of life in a community is shaped not only by its geography, topography, natural resources and location in relation to other communities but also by its infrastructure, and availability of facilities and services. The physical environment within which people live determines their standard of living, their ability to meet their basic need for shelter and their access to facilities and services. The existence and/or lack of existence of adequate infrastructure, facilities and services are

also indications of the extent of public poverty. Information obtained in the PPA obtained suggests that in most of the communities there is some level of public poverty.

### **2.3.1.1 Infrastructure**

On the whole the infrastructure in many of the communities is undeveloped and examples of this can be seen in Bellevue Chopin and Silver Lake. In a few of the communities, like Salisbury, Petit Soufriere/San Sauveur/Good Hope, The Carib Territory and Soufriere/Scottshead, there is a good network of paved roads, including feeder roads that in some cases were constructed under projects like the Basic Needs Trust Fund. However in some of the other communities including Penville, Soufriere/Scottshead, Dubic, and Gutter/Tarish Pit the roads are in very poor condition and need resurfacing. In Roseau most of the main roads are in fairly good condition, but there are several unpaved tracks leading from these to the various settlements. While in a few communities the drainage is said to be adequate but not well maintained, inadequate and poor drainage is common in many of the communities. Poor drainage was identified as a problem in eight of the communities. In many of them drains are clogged with bush, dirt and rubbish, as well as with household garbage and faeces.

The existence of utilities is a significant factor that contributes to the standard of living in a community. Public utilities are available in every community but because of the high cost some residents are not always able to afford them. Most households have access to potable water, either from public standpipes or from pipes attached to or in their homes. At the same time 90% of houses in Gallion are without water, and in Roseau Central, some residents do not have water in their homes. In some parts of the Carib Territory and in Fabre/Fond St. Jean the water supply is said to be unreliable and inadequate, and there are frequent shortages especially at the height of the dry season. Residents in Bellevue Chopin and Salisbury are of the view that the water system needs to be improved.

*"Water is low DOWASCO need to get it on their line."*

*"There are frequent water shortages."*

Most houses also have access to electricity and telephones. However because of modern communications technologies and the popularity of cell phones there has been a decrease in the use of land lines and an increase in the use of Cable TV and of the Internet, for which telephones, including cell phones are now considered essential. At the same time, residents in Bellevue Chopin, Patite Soufriere/San Sauveur/Good Hope and Silver Lake are of the view that there is a need to improve street lighting.

Public toilets are available in some of the communities. There are two in Salisbury, and one in Gallion and these are well used by the public. However, given that in some communities like Belevue Chopin, Soufriere/Scottshead and Silver Lake where there are a number of households without toilets, their absence, sometimes where they are located, and the poor condition in which they are kept create problems.

*"There is no public convenience here and there are a couple of families with no toilets."*

*"Because of where the public convenience is some persons use other unsanitary areas to excrete."*

### **2.3.1.2 Transportation**

While transportation is available to and from the communities studied, some communities are better served than others. In a few of the communities, public as well as private transport is available, but residents in most of the communities depend on public transportation. However in a few communities like Gallion, because of the poor condition of the road bus drivers refuse to go into the community. In the Carib Territory private individuals and the Carib Council provide transportation for school children, but this is not always reliable.

### **2.3.1.3 Housing**

While in several of the communities housing is of an acceptable standard, in some other it is substandard. The majority of the houses in Salisbury are of concrete, and the improvement in the type and quality of housing in this community has been accredited to the financial support of relatives in the diaspora and to returning nationals.

*"Housing situation continues to increase with support from families abroad."*

The majority of houses in Fabre and Fond St. Jean are made of concrete or of a mixture of concrete and wood and some have concrete roofs, but a few persons live in small shacks. Houses in Woodfood Hill are also constructed of concrete and wood.

Housing in the in the urban and suburban communities of Roseau and Silver Lake is not only inadequate but sub-standard. Some houses located in slums, are small, are in poor condition, and are without water and toilets. In Roseau:

*"Houses so close together they are fire hazards."*

Most of the houses in the Pond area in Roseau central are small and in a dilapidated condition, and while many are in need of repair, several need to be demolished. A number of abandoned houses are breeding places for rodents and other insects. In Roseau there is also some evidence of homelessness as 'paros' and some other destitute persons who sleep on the sidewalks.

*"Houses in Pond need to be broken down and rebuild."*

*"The destitutes and the 'paros', drug users and abusers, sleep on the sidewalks."*

In Silver Lake, a community established after Hurricane David, residents live in rooms in barracks like structures built by the government decades ago. The rooms are very small with little ventilation and many are in poor condition with leaks and rotting floors, and many of them are overcrowded.

*"Silver Lake is a slum!"*

*"The houses like fowl cage."*

*"We live in them like sardines."*

*"The galvanise when you look up you seeing heaven and the flooring and sidings are bad."*

*"The hurricane season coming and we have to look for pails to collect rain water."*

They also have no bathrooms or toilets and while there is a public toilet, it is also in a poor condition.

*"The water leakage from the septic tank gives off an awful odour. It is unbearable we need assistance to keep the public convenience clean."*

Housing in some of the rural communities is also substandard. Residents in Dubic still live in small wooden houses, and some are squatting.

*"Houses on the right side of the river are built are squatting."*

In Gutter and Tarish Pit housing varies and while some people do take pride in their homes, there are pockets of slums in which housing is substandard.

*"People take a lot of pride in their homes."*

*"I have to put a pail here, a pail there when it leaking."*

In Gallion 90 percent of the houses are in a dilapidated condition without water or toilets. In the Carib Territory, while most houses have pit toilets, some lack of slabs and risers is creating a problem for those who have to replace their toilets.

### **2.3.1.4 The Environment and Natural Resources**

The physical environment within which people live and the natural resources to which they have access contribute to and determine their standard of living and the quality of life that they can enjoy. Land is a very important resource and most of the rural communities are well endowed with this resource which residents use for agriculture. However there is still a significant amount of land, for instance in Petite Soufriere/San Sauveur/Good Hope that because of topography is still undeveloped, but there is some deforestation as trees are being cut down.

Information obtained during the PPA revealed several land tenure and land use systems. In several of the rural communities residents own the land on which they live and/or farm, and although some residents in Woodford Hill have title to their land, some in Fabre/St. Jean and in Penville may not be registered or have a certificate of ownership. At the same time, the majority of people in Dubic do not own any land and many are concerned about their state of landlessness.

Bellevue Chopin originally consisted of estates, but these were eventually subdivided and sold to residents as agricultural plots or for housing, and in Gallion and Salisbury there is a tradition of family land being handed down from generation to generation. However land tenure policy is different in the Carib Territory where the land is communal land and can only be owned by Carib people. However because the land is communal land individuals cannot use it as collateral to obtain loans from the banks. The Carib Council manages the land and has developed a Natural Resource Management Plan that it plans to implement to preserve and protect the land.

The urban and suburban communities have fewer natural resources than their rural counterparts. A river runs through Roseau and Silver Lake, and Gutter/Tarish is near to the sea. Land ownership and use is different in these communities as much of the land is owned by the government, and on which several residents are squatting. A recent Government Squatter Regularization Programme has allowed residents to own their spot for a small fee. However in Roseau Central, some residents do own land and others rent.

In some of the rural communities including Salisbury, Bellevue, and in the Carib Territory excessive use of chemicals and pesticides and the practice of slash and burn is having a negative impact on the land as well as polluting the streams and catchment areas. Deforestation and land erosion are also problems in the Carib Territory and in Bellevue Chopin.

The rivers and the sea are also important natural resources, but the data show that several negative practices are contributing to their pollution. Residents in Roseau bathe in the river and use it for washing but at the same time they dump refuse into it. This latter practice not only pollutes the river but poses a health hazard to those who in the absence of potable water use it for other purposes. In Silver Lake, Dubic and Soufriere/Scottshead/Gallion rivers and the sea are also being polluted as some residents not only dump refuse, but in the absence of toilets also defecate in the river and in the sea.

*"The improper disposal of waste is a health hazard and puts the community at risk."*

*"I live close to the sea and people use below my house as a toilet."*

In Woodford Hill while sand mining is prohibited, some people still remove sand and other material from the beach and this could eventually contribute to beach erosion.

Although there is a garbage collection agency, garbage is not always collected on a regular basis and in addition residents do not always put out their garbage at the designated times. Littering and piling-up of garbage is therefore common in several of the communities and in some garbage is either burnt or disposed of on the banks of or in rivers, ravines, or in the sea.

*“Improper disposal of waste”*

In a few communities stray dogs also spread garbage along the streets, and the presence of derelict vehicles, abandoned houses, and stagnant water creates breeding places for rodents, roaches, mosquitoes, and flies. Residents in some of the communities including Roseau, Petite Soufriere/San Sauveur/Good Hope, and Silver Lake were of the view that these had a negative impact on their physical environment.

Table 2.1: Some Common Environmental Problems

Problem	Bel	Car	Dub	Fab	Gut	Pen	Pte	Ros	Sal	Sil	Sou	Wo
Poor garbage disposal	x	x	x	x	x	-	x	x	X	x	x	-
Poor, inadequate, insufficient, toilet facilities	x	-	x	-	x	x	x	-	-	x	-	x
Defecation in bushes, rivers, sea	x		x	-	-	-	-	-	X	x	x	-
Pollution of rivers and sea	x	x	x		x	-	-	-	X		x	-
Presence of rodents etc.	x		x	x	x		x		X	x	-	-
Poor drainage	x	x	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Deforestation	-	x	x	-	-	-	x	-	-		x	
Soil erosion	-	-	-		x				X		x	x
Disposal of agricultural chemicals		x										

Key: Bel = Bellevue, Car = Carib Territory, Dub = Dubic, Gut = Gutter/Tarish Pit, Pen = Penville, Pte = Petite Soufriere/San Sauveur/Good Hope, Ros = Roseau Central, Sal = Salisbury, Sil = Silver Lake, Sou = Soufriere/Scottshead/Gallion, Woo = Woodford Hill

As can be seen in the Table 2.1 above, poor drainage, garbage disposal, inadequate toilet facilities and pollution of the rivers and sea are common problems that are contributing to the degradation of the physical environment in several of the communities. While these environmental problems are present in urban as well as in rural communities, the data and residents' comments suggest that they are more acute in the urban and suburban communities. At the same time because rural communities are endowed with more natural resources, especially with land and forests, their environments are more susceptible to problems like deforestation, indiscriminate disposal of agricultural chemicals and soil erosion.

Protection of the physical environment and conservation of natural resources are critical in order to preserve them from abuse and degradation. Moreover, residents in most of the rural communities depend on the natural resources to survive and to sustain their livelihoods. However the data show that while in some of the communities residents were only somewhat unaware of environmental issues, in many others they were aware of the negative effect that their actions have on the environment and on its natural resources. In spite of this, a significant number of people continue to misuse and abuse natural resources and to act in ways that contribute to environmental degradation. It is therefore important not only to implement an aggressive environmental education programme in all of the communities, but to take steps to improve sanitary and other conditions that contribute to the perpetuation of situations that result in practices that have negative effects on the environment.

### **2.3.2 FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

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The existence, availability and accessibility of facilities and services in communities are essential to enable residents to enjoy an acceptable standard of living. However availability alone does not ensure that residents will use or benefit from these. The extent to which they can benefit from what is available is determined by several factors including accessibility, affordability, information, and attitude of providers of the services.

Since Roseau Central is part of the capital, its residents have access to a wide range of facilities and services located in and around the city. However, while in some communities like the Carib Territory, Woodford Hill, Bellevue Chopin and Penville, facilities are either located in the community or are nearby, in others like Dubic, Silver Lake, and Fabre/St. Jean, residents have to travel to other communities to access some facilities and services.

#### **2.3.2.1 Recreational Facilities**

The data show that there are Roman Catholic and Protestant churches in most of the communities, and recreational facilities in six of the communities. However, it is noticeable that in some of the communities including Woodford Hill, recreational facilities are not always in good condition and need to be upgraded. At the same time young people in Soufriere/Scottshead/Gallion were concerned about the fact that the basketball court was being used a toilet.

*“People excrete and urinate on the court.”*

In some other communities including in the Carib Territory, because of the absence of sports equipment, activities may be limited to just a few sports like football and cricket. In spite of these constraints youngsters play along the roadsides and they improvise and create things like basketball rings and nets.

*"Young men play on a small half basketball court."*

*"There is no playing field, to have a proper game you have o go to Castle Bruce."*

It is noticeable that in no community did residents identify the existence of recreational facilities or activities for females.

### **2.3.2.2 Educational Facilities**

Residents in all of the communities recognise the importance of education, and of a "good" education in order to obtain employment and a well paid job, as well as to enable people to move out of poverty. The government also recognises the importance of education and has taken several initiatives to provide the population with access to education through a wide variety of educational facilities and programmes.

Education is compulsory, secondary education is universal and all children on leaving primary school go on to secondary school. The data show that there are some educational facilities in most of the communities including preschools or early childhood centres in seven of the communities and three preschools in the Carib Territory. The government encourages parents to make use of these facilities to prepare their children for entry into primary school.

Children in all communities have access to primary schools in their communities and as well as to secondary schools located throughout the island. Many of those who participated in PPA activities were aware of and acknowledged the increase of educational opportunities and the improvement in the level of education. However some of the information they provided also suggests that not all children make use of or benefit from the education that is available either because their parents could not always afford to give them lunch or bus fare, or to provide them with books and other materials and equipment like computers.

*"I ain't send them to school today cause I ain't have anything to give them to eat."*

*"Many young persons in the community go to school on a hungry stomach."*

*"Attend classes but do nothing in school."*

*"Some girls have to stay home to care for their siblings"*

While government does provide a school-feeding programme and free bus service for children in some communities, some other agencies do assist parents with financial and other assistance including transportation, school fees, and text books.

In spite of this there are some students who do not always obtain the results required to enable them to move to a higher level of education or to be able to gain employment. However provisions are made for those are unable to cope with academic subjects as in Woodford Hill where the Youth Division conducts vocational training for young persons.

*"It not everybody that cut out for academics."*

On another level, some residents expressed concern about the quality of education being provided to children, and they were of the view that this was being affected by the number of unqualified teachers, the high turnover of teachers and the shortage of resources.

Tertiary education is available at the Dominica State College and adult education and continuation is provided by the Adult Education Division. In some of the communities literacy is said to be high, but in Gutter/Tarish Pitt while there is illiteracy and while the Division provides opportunities for adults to upgrade their literacy skills, there are no adult education programmes in this community. In some other communities including in Fabre/Fond St. Jean when such activities were organized, residents were either reluctant to participate or participants were mostly women. Since there is a high rate of illiteracy, especially among men in Fabre/Fond St. Jean, the Division is attempting to implement a literacy programme there, and there is an adult Education Programme in Central Roseau.

Adult and continuing education can play an important role in providing a second chance for those who for various reasons were not able to complete their formal education and the Division also provides opportunities for individuals to pursue CXC subjects. Adult education is also critical for providing the adult population with the knowledge and skills they need to develop themselves, their communities and the country as a whole.

### **2.3.2.3 Community and Resource Centres**

There are two community centres in Gutter/Tarish Pit but the one in Tarish Pit is underutilised. There is a Community Resource Centre in Petite Soufriere/San Sauveur/Good Hope and a Computer Centre in Penville.

#### 2.3.2.4 Health Facilities and Services

Health centres offer a wide range of health care services and the majority of people in poor communities depend on and make use of these services. There are health centres in seven of the communities and because of their proximity to the city residents in Roseau Central, Silver Lake, and Gutter/Tarish Pit have access to a number of health facilities and services. The Carib Territory is well served by two health centres each of which is staffed by a nurse and a doctor.

While health facilities exist in several of the communities their ability to provide much-needed and high quality services from which residents can benefit depends on the availability of health personnel, of medication, and of equipment. However, major problems identified by residents in several of the communities included the absence of resident health personnel, the irregular visits of nurses and doctors, lack of medication, and availability of transportation including ambulances. In Woodford Hill the District Nurse lives in the community, medical care and free medical services are provided daily, and a doctor visits fortnightly. In Salisbury residents are satisfied with the services provided. However absence of these services was of grave concern to residents of Petite Soufriere/San Sauveur/Good Hope, Dubic, Penville, Fabre/Fond St. Jean, and Penville. Residents in Soufriere/San Sauveur were particularly concerned about lack of privacy and confidentiality because the health clinic was being conducted in a private residence.

In Bellevue Chopin and Penville while there is a health centre there is no resident nurse or doctor, the nurse visits weekly, the doctor monthly. Residents in Fabre/Fond St. Jean were of the view that the doctor should visit the elderly and house-bound on a more regular basis. In Dubic there is no health centre and health personnel do not often visit the community, but a nurse conducts clinic periodically at the Grand Bay Resource Centre. However lack of transportation for the sick and the elderly prevented them from benefiting from the services being provided at the clinic.

*"The ambulance is not always available in time of need."*

*"The doctor should visit the elderly and shut-ins."*

*"There is no health centre and the doctor or nurse does not visit."*

Unavailability of drugs and the high cost of medication were also identified as problems. The data show that not only has there been an increase in hypertension and diabetes but that in every community there are several people who are suffering from these illnesses. Availability of the relevant drugs is particularly important for such persons, but they are not always available in some of the health centres.

*"The clinic don't always have the medication."*

*"I cannot buy medicine it so expensive, I had to leave it."*

*"Sometimes when the doctor at the clinic give me medicine to buy I can't afford it and that worsen my health."*

*"When I have to buy medication for my pressure."*

At the same time health centres are not always equipped to provide some services and procedures including some tests, but many poor individuals cannot afford the cost of these and have to forego them.

*"I go to the health centre but when the doctor send me for a test is \$300 and I cannot pay."*

*"If you have to take a test no money."*

*"Some blood tests cost \$250."*

Table 2.2 below provides some information presents of Community Facilities and Services.

Table 2.2: Community Facilities and Services

Facility	Bel	Car	Dub	Fab	Gut	Pen	Pte	Ros	Sal	Sil	Sou	Wo
Preschool	-	x	-	-	x	x	X	x	x	-	-	x
Primary school	x	x	-	-	-	x	X	x	x	-	x	x
Health centre	x	x	-	-	-	x	X	x	x	-	x	x
Recreation facilities	x	x	-	-	x	x	X	-	-	v	-	x
Community/Resource centre		x	-	-	x	x	X	-	-	-	-	-
Adult Education programme	x		-	-	-	-	-	x	x			x
Computer Resource/ internet Centre	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-

**Key:** Bel = Bellevue, Car = Carib Territory, Dub = Dubic, Gut = Gutter/Tarish Pit, Pen = Penville, Pte = Petite Soufriere/San Sauveur/Good Hope, Ros = Roseau Central, Sal = Salisbury, Sil = Silver Lake, Sou = Soufriere/Scottshead/Gallion, Woo = Woodford Hill

### 2.3.3 INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANISATIONS

Institutions and organizations are vehicles through which facilities, goods and services are provided to communities and their residents. During the community workshops residents identified institutions and organisations that are present in and bring resources to their communities. They grouped the institutions and organizations according to whether their initiatives and programmes were preventative, remedial, supportive or developmental. They discussed the work that they do, they created Venn diagrams to show the organizations that were most beneficial, and they identified those that were most successful in improving the standard of living and in alleviating poverty.

The data show that some governmental institutions and civil society organizations, NGOs and CBOs, are present in all of the communities and that they implement programmes and projects through which they bring resources to the communities. They also show that their activities are intended to improve living conditions in and to develop the communities.

### **2.3.3.1 Government Institutions**

Among the ministries and departments that work in the communities are: the Welfare Department, the Local Government Department, the Village Councils, the Women's Bureau, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Fisheries and Forestry Divisions, the Fair Trade Organisation, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Carib Affairs, the Adult Education Division, the Education Trust Fund, The Youth Division, The Drug Prevention Unit, the Dominica Social Investment Fund, the Basic Needs Trust Fund, and the HIV/AIDS Unit.

The Welfare Department, Local Government, the Ministries of Agriculture, Carib Affairs and Health and the Education Trust fund have outreach programmes through which essential services are delivered to residents in the various communities. The Welfare Department, the Education Trust Fund and Local Government were operating in every community and residents in most of the communities said that they were important because their presence was strongly felt, they brought resources to the community, they provide assistance to several needy individuals, they contribute to the improvement of living conditions, and help to reduce poverty.

*"The most important institutions are Welfare and the Education Trust Fund."*

Residents in eight of the communities said that the Education Trust Fund had provided text books and transportation to secondary school students. However some were of the view that some children who were in need had not benefited from their assistance.

*"Education Trust fund could give a little more help."*

### **The Welfare Department**

The data show not only that the Welfare is an important institution, but that its presence is felt in all of the communities studied. It not only provides financial and other assistance to a number of people in every community, but for many of its recipients its assistance is crucial to their survival. In spite of this not everyone was satisfied with the amount of assistance provided, with how it was provided and who benefited from it. People commented on the length of time it takes for the Department to provide the assistance that they needed, and some believed that not everyone knew about the department and what it offers.

*"They assist those who can already afford. Those who need the assistance never get it."*

*"I have seven children I am unemployed and yet I don't get any assistance from Welfare."*

*"I went to Welfare for some help they tell me they coming, up to now I still waiting."*

*"We trying but we not getting help from the government."*

*"Welfare must learn to give public assistance on time."*

*"Some people who need assistance do not know about the organization."*

At the same time, while some were not content with the amount of money given by the Department, \$85 to \$250 monthly, there were others who believed that the Department encourages laziness and dependency. Residents in Dubic commented on the existence of an inherited dependency syndrome which in their opinion has prevented personal development as well as the development of their community.

*"Welfare should try to increase the amount given."*

*"Too many young people depend on welfare for assistance."*

*"When we stop depending on government to do things for us then we can say we developing. It is time to take our development in our own hands."*

While information provided by residents in all of the communities indicates that the programmes of the Department had a positive impact on the lives of many and that it has been successful in improving living conditions, there was also evidence that some individuals in all of the communities depend to a greater or lesser extent, on welfare in order to survive and sustain their livelihoods. However, while for such persons the assistance that they receive is essential for their survival and allows them to meet some of their basic needs, welfare alone is not sufficient to improve their standard of living or the quality of their lives, or to move them out of poverty.

Moreover, as pointed out by residents in Dubic, dependence on welfare also has other implications. It can create a "culture of dependency" that robs people of the motivation to take responsibility for their lives and of the confidence to take action to improve their situation. Consequently, although there is evidence that the work of the Welfare Department is critical and welcomed, it is important that in addition to providing welfare, government's attempts to improve living conditions and to alleviate or reduce poverty must include other, additional strategies.

## **Local Government**

The work of the Welfare Department is intended to tackle the causes of private poverty that of the Local Government Department is intended to reduce public poverty. However according to residents while this Department implements mostly infrastructural projects, it also organises income-generating projects and offers training programmes.

Residents in some of the communities praised this institution for its work in improving the infrastructure, especially for fixing roads and drains, those in Bellevue Chopin agreed that it had brought some resources to the community. On the other hand, residents in Dubic were of the view that it had neglected their community.

*"The Local Government helps with the roads and drains. A muddy dirt road was paved."*

*"Feeder roads have been constructed."*

*"We have been neglected for three years. No development programmes or projects have been implemented since the last Poverty Reduction Programme."*

Another activity of the Local Government is to assist communities to establish Village Councils. These Councils were only mentioned in five of the communities and there were opposing views about their roles, about the way in which they were functioning and about their effectiveness. Residents in Soufriere/Scottshead/Galleon disagreed about the role of the Council and most of them said that the Council was not working well. The Council in Woodford Hill was also not functioning well and some people were of the view that it was not playing the role that it should; residents in Roseau were of the view that the City council could do more.

### **The Adult Education Division**

Only in a few of the communities did residents indicate that the Adult Education Division was working in their communities, but in some of these communities people were of the view that its programmes were critical. For example in Salisbury adult education programmes were seen to be critical for addressing the concerns of young people, especially of young men; for illiterate adults; and for dropouts; but it was felt that the Division had done very little to improve living conditions in the community.

*"The Adult Education Division needs to implement literacy programmes for adults and skills programmes for high school dropouts."*

Residents in Roseau recognised the existence of the Division and those in Gutter/Tarish Pit identified the need for more public education on HIV/AIDS. However people in Penville commented on the fact that the Division was no longer present in their community.

Given the important role that adult education can play in encouraging and facilitating personal, community, and national development, the Adult Education Division faces a challenge of developing, designing and implementing a wide variety of programmes that can meet the specific educational needs of various groups in the society.

While the data suggests that some priority needs to be given to improving literacy in some of the communities, it also suggests that attention must be paid to skill training for youth; to drug abuse, to issues like healthy lifestyles, nutrition, and HIV/AIDS; and

to environmental issues. However, in order to ensure that its programmes reach various audiences and have the widest possible impact it would be important for the Division to liaise, collaborate and cooperate with other relevant government institutions and with NGOs that focus on these issues. This will no doubt be a challenge. The Division will also have the task and be challenged to motivate and encourage young as well as older adults to participate in its programmes. It must therefore devise strategies for facilitating wide participation not only in all of its programmes, but in those of other agencies that offer programmes to educate the adult population.

### **The Forestry and Fisheries Divisions**

Residents in Dubic referred to the frequent visits made by officials and the discussions that they held with them on issues like keeping the river clean, cutting of trees and hulling of lumber. At the same time residents in Fabre/Fond St. Jean said that the Fisheries division provides technical assistance and training to the members of the Fisheries Cooperative. They acknowledged the value of the assistance of the Division and the contribution that it was making to fishing, the means of their livelihood.

While other government institutions do operate in the communities, on the whole residents were of the view that either they were not playing any significant role in the life of the community, or their contributions were minimal. Among such institutions were the Drug Prevention Unit, The HIV/ AIDS Unit and the Women's Bureau.

*"The Drug Prevention Unit needs to play a greater role."*

*"More public education in the community by the HIV/AIDS people."*

### **2.3.3.2 Regional and International Agencies**

Among those operating in a few of the communities are CDB/Basic Needs Trust Fund, UNPD, UNICEF, USAID, and the Peace Corps. They have implemented projects in the Carib Teritority and Dubic.

### **Civil Society Organisations**

Civil Society Organisations include Private Sector and Non Governmental Organisations. Among the latter are NGOs that operate at the national level and CBOs at the community level.

### **Private Sector Organisations**

A few of the communities, especially those near to urban centres, benefit from the presence and/or services provided by these organisations. However, because their products and services are not free not all residents in these communities can afford

them. At the same time some private sector organisations do sponsor some community activities including sports and cultural events.

### **National Level Non-Governmental Organisations**

Among these are The Red Cross, The Christian Children's Fund, (CCF), Credit Unions, service organisations like the Rotary Club, Dominica Planned Parenthood Association, The Social Centre, Centres where Adolescents Learn To Love and Serve (CALLS), Church groups including the St. Vincent de Paul Society, women's, men and youth groups; Credit Unions, Fair Trade Group, Brownies, Girl Guides, Scouts, Cadets, and 4H Clubs.

While the work of NGOs does impact on the living conditions in communities, their programmes and activities focus on and respond to the needs of individuals and vulnerable groups, including children and women, youth and the elderly. They therefore play a vital role in the lives of many individuals and they bring a wide range of financial, human, and material resources to many households.

All of the NGOs mentioned above operate in one or other of the twelve communities studied. However the data show that in the view of residents the most important and useful of these are the Christian Children Fund and the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

The former has been operating in several communities over a long period of time and residents in Petite Soufriere/San Sauveur/Good Hope point out that it has been in their community for over twenty-seven years. The organization is concerned about the growth, development and welfare of children and has provided resources that help parents of needy children to meet their basic needs of food, shelter and clothing. It also assists school children of all ages with texts books, uniforms and transportation.

*"Over 50% of the children here (in Dubic) benefit from the CCF Programme."*

*"CCF relieves the plight of needy children."*

Residents in all of the communities were of the view that through its various programmes the CCF has contributed and is continuing to contribute to the improvement of life and living conditions in their communities.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society is also regarded as an important organization that is contributing to the improvement of life and living conditions in the communities in which it works. While it does provide some assistance to needy children, its programmes pays more attention to elderly persons. It not only helps them to meet their basic needs and assists with household chores, but it also offers them companionship, a need that is of great importance for elderly person.

*"The St. Vincent de Paul Society assists the elderly and shut-ins, They help with medical expenses, food and bus fares."*

*"We are grateful for the contributions of St. Vincent de Paul Society."*

In Dominica, Credit Unions are well known and respected organizations that provide a variety of financial services, some of which may not be available to poorer members of the society from institutions like commercial banks, and they encourage people to save. While Credit Unions were mentioned in only half of the communities, a few persons were not always satisfied with the services being offered. Some residents in Gutter/Tarish Pit felt that enough loans were not available and even when loans were available, because of the high interest they could not afford to take them.

*"Credit union should pass around to see the needs of the people."*

*"They should make more loans available."*

*"The interest too high."*

*"Credit facility is there but it not affordable."*

The Dominica Planned Parenthood Association appears to have been successful in encouraging women to plan their families, and according to one woman it is doing a wonderful job.

*"Family planning come first cause it working for me."*

It has also organised family life programmes in Dubic, however some people were of the view that it should take its programmes to high schools.

The Rotary Club is working in a few of the communities and it has built a public toilet in Silver Lake.

Four H Clubs, Brownies, Guides, Boy Scouts and the Cadet Corps can play in shaping young minds and instilling morals and values and residents in which they were present, especially in Gutter/Tarish Pit, recognised the important role that they were playing.

*"Three young men who were in the Cadets are now policemen."*

*"I am very satisfied with what the 4H club is doing with my daughter."*

## **Community-Based Organisations**

People in communities often form themselves into groups to further their interests, meet individual and community needs, solve community problems, and take action to achieve individual and community goals. These community-based organizations (CBOs) therefore play important roles in the lives of individuals and in the development of the communities.

There are various CBOs in several of the communities, and residents in the community workshops identified church groups, sports and cultural clubs, women's, men's and youth groups, farmers' groups, political groups and community development groups.

Groups of different denominations operate in several of the communities and while much of their work is focused on the spiritual development of individuals, they also organise practical activities through which they provide assistance that helps people to meet their basic needs. Residents in Penville acknowledged that the Women's Club had organised programmes that had empowered women and made valuable contributions to the community and there is also a Senior Citizen's Group. The Catholic Men's Group in Salisbury was also active. The Development Committee and Echoes of the South in Soufriere and Improvement Committee in Scottshead implement programmes to develop their communities. In Petite Soufriere there are eight CBOs including a Disaster Preparedness Committee and in Fabre/St. Jean there is also a Disaster Preparedness Committee and a Fisheries Group. There is an Organic Farmers' Group in Bellevue Chopin, and in the Carib Territory there is a Craft Association, a Fisheries Group, an Events Planning Committee, and a Committee of Concerned Women.

Several of these community groups were reported to be doing important work that benefited individual residents and the community as a whole but some others were either not functioning well or not being effective.

Various government agencies, NGOs and CBOs have created facilities and services that provide assistance and support to residents, and while many of them through their programmes and activities have been helping to improve living conditions of poor individuals and of the community as a whole, several people were of the view that some of them needed to do much more. For example there were no CBOs in Silver Lake and the residents complained that not many organizations even visited their community.

Residents in some of the communities also felt that some individuals who were most in need were not receiving the type and amount of assistance and support that they needed. According to them, institutions and organisations should pay more attention to the poor and the very poor. They were also of the view that much more needed to be done to improve living conditions and to reduce poverty in their communities.

During the community workshops residents identified some of the agencies and organizations that were operating in their communities and grouped them according to whether their programmes and activities were developmental, preventative, remedial or supportive. They also identified the institutions or organizations that they believed were most successful in improving living conditions or reducing poverty in the community.

Table 2.3 identifies some of the institutions and organizations that operate in the communities and those from which residents believed that they have benefited most.

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Table 2.3: Types of Institutions and Organizations

Community	Developmental	Preventative	Remedial	Supportive	Most Beneficial
Bellevue/Chopin	5	2	3	3	Churches, Village Council
Carib Territory	9	4	5	16	Christian Children's Fund
Dubic	5	1	2	4	Educational Trust Fund Christian Children Fund
Fabre/Fond St. Jean	3	-	1	4	Fisheries Cooperative Welfare Division
Gutter/Tarish Pit	3	4	6	3	Christian Children Fund, Cadet Corps, Welfare Department
Penville	6	5	4	9	Welfare Department Christian Children Fund, Churches
Petite Soufriere San Sauveur Good Hope	3	1		4	Christian Children Fund St. Vincent de Paul Society
Roseau Central	9	5	3	13	Christian Children Fund
Salisbury	6	3	10	5	St. Vincent de Paul Society
Silver Lake	2	3	1	6	St. Vincent de Paul Society Welfare Department
Soufriere Scottshead Galleon	6	6	5	6	St. Vincent de Paul Society
Woodford Hill	8	5	3	8	Education Trust Fund CCF

Table 2.3 shows that Roseau Central and the Carib Territory have the largest number of institutions and organizations providing services, resources and support to their residents. Since Roseau Central is part of the city, most of the government institutions are located there, and several NGOs may also have their headquarters or offices there, so this is not surprising. Residents in this community therefore have easier access to services and resources of these institutions and organizations than their counterparts in rural communities. At the same time, because the Carib Territory is viewed as a special and important area and since it does contain some pockets of poverty, Government has taken steps to ensure that its residents have access to resources, services and support that they need to improve their living conditions and residents have also developed some CBOs.

Woodford Hill, Salisbury, Penville and Soufriere/Scottshead/Galleon are also well served by institutions and organizations, and while Bellevue Chopin, Silver Lake, and Dubic are not as well served, Fabre/Fond St. Jean and Petite Soufriere/San Sauveur/Good Hope have the smallest number of institutions.

Other information provided by those who participated in PPA activities suggests that in the communities in which a large number of institutions are working the extent and severity of poverty is less than that in communities in which there are fewer institutions and organizations.

Table 2.3 also shows that there are eighty-one supportive institutions and organizations working in the communities, and information provided by residents confirmed that the support being provided by these institutions and organizations is not only essential, but that it is making a difference in the lives of those who are receiving their assistance. At the same time, while there are some organizations like the Planned Parenthood Association and the Guides, Scouts and Cadet Corps, that are working to prevent and to remedy some of the problems with which residents are faced, their numbers are significantly lower, forty-three remedial and thirty-nine preventative, than those of whose programmes and activities are supportive. However while the evidence does show that support is critical to the survival of many residents, it is also important to consider programmes and activities that can prevent some of the problems that been identified by residents as well as to address and remedy some of the existing problems.

In addition, although some support, prevention and remedies for problems are available and effective, these alone would be unable to equip, enable, and empower residents to be motivated and to take action to change their situation and to move out of poverty. While residents identified sixty-five developmental programmes, greater emphasis needs to be placed on these because they are the ones that will ensure that residents are well equipped to take the action to improve their living conditions. Adult education, self-development, skills training, health education and problem-solving programmes, as well as programmes that teach people how to harness and make the best use of available resources, and programmes that empower people are the ones that can best achieve this task. This is so because such programmes can not only provide residents with knowledge and skills, but can help them to improve their self-esteem and to gain the self-confidence they need to be able to take decisions and actions that are necessary in order for them to develop themselves and to change and improve the conditions in which they are living.

Information provided by many of the residents also suggests that they are of the view that they are benefiting more from the programmes and activities of NGOs than from those of the government. Residents in seven of the communities were high in praise of the work of the Christian Children Fund, and they singled out as the organization from which needy persons, especially children, were benefiting most. On the other hand the St. Vincent de Paul Society was identified as the organization that, more than any other, was meeting the needs of the elderly. However, the majority of the residents agreed that of the government institutions identified, the Welfare Department was the one whose programmes, activities and assistance were helping to improve living conditions and reduce poverty, and were having the greatest impact on people's lives.

## SECTION 3: THE ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The ability of residents to sustain their livelihoods depends on a sound national economy, and opportunities for them to engage in productive activities from which they can earn an income that would allow them to at least meet their basic needs. The data show that some residents in all of the communities are engaged in economic activities in the formal and informal sectors of the economy, and that some, especially male youth, may also be engaged in and depend on an underground economy to sustain their livelihoods.

### 3.1 THE FORMAL ECONOMY

Within the formal economy, agriculture in rural communities and fishing in the coastal communities are the two main activities in which residents in the communities studied are engaged. Tourism, and related activities like eco-tourism and craft, are also a sector that is developing. In all of the communities there are some residents who are employed in the public and private sectors and some who are self-employed. See Table: 3.0 below.

Table 3.1: Some of the Activities in the Formal Economy

Community	Farming	Fishing	Bay Oil	Tour Guides	Craft
Bellevue/Chopin	x	-	-	-	-
Carib Territory	x	x	-	x	x
Dubic	x	x	x	-	-
Fabre/Fond St. Jean	x	x	x	-	-
Gutter/Tarish Pit	x	-	-	-	-
Penville	x	-	-	-	x
Petite Soufriere San Sauveur Good Hope	x	x	x	x	-
Roseau	-	-	-	-	-
Salisbury	x	--	-	-	-
Silver Lake	-	-	-	-	-
Soufreire Scottshead Galleon	x	x	-	-	-
Woodford Hill	x	-	-	-	-

### 3.1.1 AGRICULTURE

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The data show that agriculture is the main economic activity in ten of the communities, and that many residents in the rural communities are engaged in and depend on agriculture to sustain their livelihoods. Many farmers were formerly engaged in the banana industry but with the decline in the industry, several in Woodford Hill, in the Carib Territory and in other former banana producing communities, have diversified and turned to cultivation of root crops and vegetables.

Access to fertile land is essential for the production of crops, but residents in a few of the communities identified this as a problem that is either due to topography or access. In Fabre and Fond St. Jean the steep nature of the land and the soil type limits the number and types of crops that can be grown; residents in some communities, including Dubic, Fabre and St. Jean, and in Petite Soufriere, San Sauveur and Good Hope identified difficulties in accessing land.

*"Land is available but not accessible."*

*"Even when land was available it is not accessible."*

*"We living in a valley, in a hole, we need land to grow crops, especially in Soufriere."*

*"Only about 10% have access to family land."*

*"Land could be acquired from estate owners and subdivided among households."*

#### 3.1.1.1 Crop Production

Farming is the main economic activity in several of the communities, and most of those involved in farming are peasant farmers engaged in small-scale agriculture. In Woodford Hill unlike Fabre/Fond St. Jean, the soil is very fertile and suitable for farming – the community is considered to be the one of the most productive agricultural areas in the island and is noted for producing large quantities of high quality bananas. However with decline in this industry, fewer bananas are now being produced. Agriculture is still the main source of income and several people in the rural communities are involved in planting a large variety of root crops, some of which are bought by hucksters who travel to neighbouring islands. At the same time because of regulations that control certification to sell the crops, there has been a drastic decline in the numbers of persons involved in agriculture. On the other hand, farmers in Woodford Hill do have access to an agricultural centre from which they can purchase seedlings, gain technical information and benefit from a demonstration plot.

Farming is also the main economic activity in the Carib Territory and ten of the farmers are certified banana farmers, but others are engaged in the production of root crops and fruit. At one time the production of coconuts was a thriving industry and the Territory produced the largest amount of copra but disease and pests have affected the bearing capacity and the size of the nuts, and have contributed to its decline.

For some farmers access to resources like fertiliser and agricultural supplies is difficult, and in several of the communities they have said that finding and accessing markets for agricultural produce was a problem. This was so for farmers in Petite Soufriere, San Sauveur and Good Hope who produce a variety of root crops but are experiencing difficulties in finding markets for their produce. Some farmers felt strongly that if they could get markets for their produce it would help them to move out of poverty.

*"I working the land but you never get sale for your crops so you don't make money."*

*"After I spend my energy and finance on agriculture after harvesting there is no market."*

*"Having things and cannot sell because there is no market."*

*"The hucksters do not go all the way to Petite Soufriere."*

*"To ease up poverty is to create markets."*

Production of Bay Oil is a source of income for some residents in Fabre and Fond St. Jean, in Dubic, and in Petite Soufriere, San Sauveur and Good Hope. It is a seasonal crop that is purchased twice per year and the conditions under which it is being processed appear to be still traditional and labour-intensive, suggesting that there has been little use of modern technology in the production process. At the same time, those involved in its production had several concerns. On the one hand they do not always own or have access to the land on which the bay is planted and the bay belongs to the landowners. On the other hand, it appears that because of restrictions, the producers have little, if any, control over the sale of the oil, including the price and to whom it is sold, and they complained of lack of markets for the oil.

*"We have no control over the sale of Bay Oil or how it is sold."*

*"Tell the government to buy our bay oil and we will not be poor."*

*"Allow other buyers to purchase Bay Oil."*

*"When we distil it we cannot sell it on the market."*

*"I make bay oil but there is no market."*

In Fabre and Fond St. Jean farming is done mainly for domestic consumption

*"I plant so that I can eat."*

*"You see me these days I eat what I plant."*

Predial larceny is also serious problem in nine of the communities including Galleon, Petite Soufriere, San Sauveur, Good Hope and in the Carib Territory.

*"I working hard but people passing and steal the food before I can sell it."*

*"I stopped farming because of people stealing my crops."*

*"You plant garden and thief steal the produce before the owner."*

*"Before crops are ready people take them."*

During the women's focus group discussion in Bellevue Chopin some of the female farmers expressed their concern about being unrecognised and overlooked and about their contributions being undervalued and they shared experiences that proved this to be true.

*"I have been a farmer for years, I love being a farmer."*

*"As women we need to be recognised as farmers."*

*"When they were distributing inputs I was overlooked as a woman."*

*"When they come to your place and see the type of work you doing and realise that you is a woman doing all that work..."*

*"If the women of Bellevue have the land they will do farming because they love it, but most of the land is estate land."*

*"If we have access to land we would do farming."*

Although this gender issue was only raised by women in one focus group discussion, in only one community, information obtained from farmers in other communities, and comments made by women in some communities do suggest that there are female farmers in some of the communities and that some of them may have had similar experiences.

Research in some of the other islands has also shown that female farmers are often ignored and may not be always able to access or receive the same agricultural services, information, or inputs as their male counterparts. Since in the Caribbean a large number of women are involved in agriculture at various levels including as farmers and as agricultural labourers, it is important that this gender issue be addressed.

Some male and female farmers in several communities were also of the view that farmers were not being given the resources that they needed or the consideration that they deserved.

*"No consideration for farmers."*

*"We need more help from government for agriculture, more inputs, access roads to our farms, markets for produce."*

### **3.1.2 FISHING**

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Fishing is an economic activity in five of the communities. In Fabre/Fond St. Jean fishing is the main source of income, and there is an active Fisheries Cooperative. While most of the fishermen owned their boats, they were of the view that improved facilities including bigger boats with modern equipment and improved landing sites would improve their chances of earning more.

*"We lack modern equipment."*

*"Small boats can only hold one engine, but we cannot buy larger boats because we don't make much and we can't get credit."*

Fishing is also the main economic activity in Soufriere and Scottshead, but In Dubic fishing is done on a small scale mostly for domestic use and here, as in the Carib Territory some of the young men are engaged in fishing.

Several fishermen talked about the risks that they face in going out to sea, including the possibility of catching nothing.

*"Going to sea is a big risk."*

*"I am a fisherman, sometimes I go out to fish and come back with nothing."*

*"Today I was on the sea but I catch nothing."*

They also talked about the high costs associated with fishing that often hampered them, and identified the high cost of gas as a serious problem.

*"My engine down, the parts to fix it cost so high I cannot buy them."*

*"The cost of gas too high."*

*"The price of gas is a problem."*

*"Give a reduced price on petrol for our fishermen."*

While fishing does provide an income for fishermen in some of the communities, the data suggests that the industry may not be well developed, and according to the fisher-folk they need financial resources and better equipment and facilities to enable them to improve their incomes. Suggestions were also made about the need for related activities and several women felt that fish processing and packaging would not only provide more employment opportunities, but would contribute to the fishing industry as well as to their livelihoods.

### 3.1.3 CRAFT AND TOUR GUIDES

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Both of these activities are linked to an emerging tourism sector based on the island's natural resources and beauty. The Carib territory is also an area of great historical interest to which attempts have been made to attract tourists. Several women in the Territory are engaged in production of traditional craft items some of which are sold to visitors to the Territory and some to others outside of the Territory. However because of competition from others outside who buy their products for resale in other tourist areas, Carib women are finding that selling their craft has not been as lucrative for them as it could be. Tours to the Territory are also organised and they provide some opportunities for residents to act as tour guides. Some craft is also done by women in Penville.

*"I make my little craft, hats, bags, little things, and I used to sell them to tourists in Roseau and Portsmouth."*

## 3.2 THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

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The informal sector economy is more flexible than the formal economy and it provides opportunities for persons who may be unqualified for jobs in the formal sector, and for persons who have few marketable skills and are unemployed, to obtain some level of income. It is characterized by a large number and wide variety of activities and the data show that in every community there are people who are engaged in and depend on these activities for an income.

Individuals involved in this sector move in and out of the sector in response to their demand for financial resources or to meet specific financial needs. However, because of its volatility and unpredictability jobs can be part-time, seasonal and unsustainable. Like the formal sectors of the economy, the informal sector is segmented along gender lines with males and females more likely to be engaged in activities that are seen to be appropriate to their gender.

While males as well as females are small business owners, shopkeepers, and operators of snackettes, discos, bars or cafes, and in vending, males are usually involved in traditional male activities as construction workers, drivers, or in doing odd jobs like car washing. On the other hand, women are usually hairdressers, seamstresses, or domestic workers, or they may braid hair, activities that are extension of their gender roles as homemakers and caregivers.

### 3.2.1 THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY

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The underground economy is part of the informal economy that is often characterized by involvement in the drug trade, gambling and other illegal activities. While the data show that in some of the communities there are some people, especially young unemployed men, who are involved in and depend on such activities to sustain their livelihoods, it appears that this economy is more vibrant in the urban and suburban communities of Roseau, Silver Lake, and Gutter/Tarish Pit.

Some of those who depended on illegal activities for an income felt that they had no choice.

*"I would sell drugs if I had to in order to survive."*

*"Sometimes you have to sell drugs, do illegal things."*

*"Is not what you really want to do but you do have a choice."*

### 3.3 EMPLOYMENT, UNDEREMPLOYMENT, AND UNEMPLOYMENT

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Opportunities to obtain jobs that would pay reasonable wages are essential for survival, and residents in all communities believe that employment and well paid jobs would help them to move out of poverty.

Discussions with residents in all of the communities revealed that some people are not always clear about the concepts of employed, self-employed and unemployed and that in their view being employed meant working for and being paid by someone else. However paid employment in permanent jobs is not readily available to the majority of people within the communities studied. In some cases this is because they lack marketable skills; in others even some individuals with skills do not think of using their skills to become self-employed or to earn an income, and many of the farmers and women who were vendors did not see themselves as being employed. Several of those who work their own farm, worked with their spouses on the farm or did sharecropping, considered themselves to be unemployed.

In many of the communities studied, unemployment as well as under-employment is common. Unemployment among young people is particularly high in Galleon, Soufriere, and Scottshead as well as in Woodford Hill. It is also high among women in Salisbury and in Gutter/Tarish Pit, and the majority of residents in Silver Lake are unemployed.

*"I have been unemployed since I was twenty."*

*"Unemployment very high in Galleon."*

*"Anytime you not working you fall under the poverty line."*

Several unemployed persons said that they have difficulties in obtaining jobs especially if they lived in rural communities where job opportunities are few. They therefore have to seek employment outside of their communities.

*"Most persons have to leave Penville to get employment."*

*"Job opportunities are not readily available in the community."*

*"We need not just employment but suitable employment."*

At the same time many of the participants are aware that inability to obtain jobs is often determined by several factors. They mentioned low levels of education, lack of qualifications and work experience, political affiliation, and sexual exploitation.

*"Political victimization. Two people from here apply to the Police Force, they took people from other communities but because they from this community they did not take them; it hurtful now they just on the road."*

*"We want to work we want jobs but the government don't care."*

*"Giving your body for money cannot solve your problem, is a job you want."*

Several females are well aware of gender segmentation of the labour market and they believe that it is easier for men to get jobs than it is for women.

*"It have more jobs for men."*

*"Men more easy to get jobs."*

*"Most jobs are construction, carrying boxes and men handling goods, employers would not hire women to do these jobs."*

While several people, including farmers and fishermen, are self-employed, their incomes are often insufficient to meet even their basic needs or to afford a comfortable life. Many of those who participated in PPA activities pointed out that even when job opportunities and jobs were available wages were too low, and for some their wages were so low and transportation and other costs so high that it was uneconomical to continue to work. Others felt that with help from government they could become self-employed.

Many of those who participated in PPA activities pointed out that job opportunities and jobs were few and that wages were too low.

*"I was working but I stopped because the amount I was making was just to pay bus fare and it wasn't enough."*

*"I know that the government cannot provide a job for everyone but if they put the necessary things in place to assist us we can become self-employed."*

*"We go into business but because of lack of finance in the community the businesses fail."*

Because some economic activities, including farming, fishing, and tourism are seasonal, persons engaged in such activities not only become unemployed during the off seasons but they do not usually have an income on a regular basis. This not only creates instability in personal and family finances that can contribute to transient poverty, and put some households at risk of falling into poverty.

*"People who are engaged in seasonal activity have to find alternate means of income during the off season."*

*"I am at risk of continuing to remain poor."*

The data therefore show that there is a group of people who could be defined as the working poor. Such persons, although employed, were working for salaries or wages that were insufficient to allow them to meet their basic needs, pay their bills and enjoy an acceptable standard of living.

*"Well I am a working poor. I get a salary but due to the high cost of living it can't adequately meet all my needs."*

*"When you get a salary of \$1,200 and you have to pay transportation, buy clothes, pay bills and save how can you survive?"*

*"You can be employed and still struggling."*

*"Being a working poor make you feel ashamed."*

## SECTION 4: THE SOCIAL DIMENSION

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The social environment within which people live determines, to a large extent, the quality of their lives and their sense of well being. During the community workshops and focus group discussions residents in all of the communities identified positive and negative features of their social environment. They are aware that in a good social environment there will be an absence of social problems, and that there will be opportunities to obtain a good education, to enjoy good health and good social relationships, and to have access to facilities and services as well as to supportive social networks.

Residents identified positive as well as negative factors in their communities and discussed the ways in which they contributed to a healthy or unhealthy social environment. Among the positive factors that they identified were a pleasing physical environment, good and harmonious social relationships, cooperation among community members, with a low incidence of crime and violence, access to facilities and services, participation in well-functioning community groups. A great deal of importance was placed on education, good health, and harmonious relationships.

### 4.1 EDUCATION

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Residents in every community were aware of the value of education and of the increase in educational opportunities, and they believed that a good education would not only help individuals to move out of poverty, but would also benefit the community.

*"Education covers everything."*

*"An increase in the level of education of residents."*

*"Our children are better educated now and are helping to shape the community."*

Most of the respondents placed a great deal of emphasis on their children's education and most of the young people recognised the need to further their studies in academic subjects in formal setting.

*"Finishing school and getting a good education."*

*"Not just education but **good** education"*

*"It makes me determined to do better at school."*

*"If you do not have money you can't buy food and if you don't get education you will not have money."*

*"They send their children to school so the children will have a better future."*

*"I make sure my child have what he need for school."*

However while there was general agreement that there had been an increase in educational opportunities, the data show that although parents tried to ensure that their children acquire an education, some children have few opportunities to pursue or benefit from available education opportunities. As a result, because of poverty, many of the children in poor households and in poorer communities like Silver Lake were unable to take advantage of the educational opportunities that exist and that would allow them to acquire secondary or tertiary education.

*"My parents could not afford to send me to college after high school because we are poor."*

*"Some parents find it easier when the children don't go to high school since it is expensive to send them."*

*"Parents do not have enough money to buy books or pay for CXC."*

*"Well most of the children does dropout, mother can't pay school fees, and buy books".*

*Most of the children here don't finish high school. Mothers see it as an ease because high school is a expensive thing."*

*"I feel bad because I cannot send nothing for my son studying in Cuba."*

*"Our children go to school without anything much to eat."*

*"Sometimes when we go to school we don't eat breakfast or we don't have break."*

The data also show that several women and girls have had to dropout of school because of teenage pregnancy, or to stay at home to care for siblings, that a few boys had left school because of indiscipline, and that some boys as well as girls had left to hustle and do odd jobs so as to earn money to contribute to household income. In some cases, children who are performing well on academic subjects are forced to dropout of school. Some young people criticised the current education with its emphasis on academics. They identified the need for more technical and vocational training and more practical subjects.

*"Change the pattern of education."*

*"Too much emphasis on academics; there should be other studies for people who can use their hands."*

Irregular attendance and dropping out of school not only have serious implications for children's performance at school and on their ability to further and complete their education, but also limit their life chances, since educational levels determine whether they will be able to gain employment that will provide them with sufficient income to meet their basic needs and sustain their livelihoods.

It is therefore not important only to provide opportunities for children to access formal education but it is also necessary to provide more support to poorer children to enable them to pursue and benefit from all levels of education.

Information provided by respondents shows that several residents in the communities either had low levels of education or by their own admission were functionally illiterate. In some communities, including Fabre/Fond St. Jean, there is a high rate of illiteracy and this is especially high among men.

Adult and continuing education provides opportunities and a second chance for people to upgrade or complete their education and to acquire additional knowledge and skills that would increase their chances of obtaining employment and an income that would help them to move out of poverty. However, while the Adult Education Unit does provide some opportunities for residents in some of the communities to participate in literacy and in non-formal adult and continuing education programmes, the data show that interest and participation in these programmes were usually low and some respondents gave the following reasons for this.

*"There are no programmes here."*

*"No literacy or adult education classes here."*

*"No-one to see about the children."*

*"Not interested."*

*"I don't have any money to pay."*

*"They cost money and money is limited."*

*"I have to work."*

In every society it is the adults who are responsible for developing their communities and for ensuring that national development goals can be achieved. It is therefore very important to provide opportunities for adults to upgrade their education, including their literacy skills, and to motivate and encourage them to participate in adult and continuing education programmes. However, such programmes must be based on the specific educational needs of different groups of adults and must be made available in all communities across the country. But the data show that of the communities studied, adult education programmes are only being offered in a few, that some of the programmes are not provided on a regular basis, and that some of the programmes that are available are not having the desired impact on the communities in which they have been implemented .

## 4.2 HEALTH

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A healthy physical environment, good health and access to good quality health care are important contributors to a healthy social environment. However the data show that the physical environment in several communities was unhealthy. Poor personal hygiene, lack of sanitary facilities, improper garbage disposal, the existence of mosquitoes and

rodents, and noise pollution were all having a negative impact on the social environment in many of the communities. Poor diet was also contributing to poor health. In the communities studied adults as well as children had several health problems and some were suffering from several illnesses.

Apart from common colds and the flu, children were found to be suffering from some respiratory diseases including allergies, asthma, and sinusitis; a few had eczema and sickle cell disease. Lifestyle diseases – diabetes and hypertension were common among a large number of adult males and females, but anxiety and depression rates were higher among females. Some elderly persons had arthritis, a small number of men had prostate cancer and a small number of women had fibroids and ovarian cysts. While most residents were aware of the dangers of HIV/AIDS they did not provide any information about whether there were community members who had contracted the disease. AIDS was said to exist in the Carib Territory. Alcoholism and drug abuse were identified as health problems in several of the communities, and there was also a number of persons with physical and mental disabilities in some of the communities.

### **4.3 SOCIAL RELATIONS AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

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In every household and in community every community, people depend on each other for their survival and for their sense of well being. How they relate and the quality of their relationships therefore contribute to the social environment in which they live. Relationships within the family, between males and females and between parents and children, and between young people and elderly persons, as well as relationships with neighbours can therefore be used as indicators of the social environment. However the data show that poverty can have serious negative effects on families and on relationships within families and between residents.

#### **4.3.1 RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN FAMILIES**

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Several respondents pointed out that poverty does affect relationships between family members in various negative ways. They cited lack of communication, frustration and anger as being unable to meet basic needs, lack of unity as each tries to survive on his/her own, and lack of privacy in overcrowded conditions. It was also said that break up of families could result from partners having affairs to bring more money into the household.

### 4.3.2 GENDER RELATIONSHIPS

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Relationships between males and females are influenced by societal norms and by societal expectations about what is believed to be acceptable behaviour of males and females. Consequently while it is expected and accepted that marriage is/should be the outcome of male-female relationships, the data show that common-law and visiting relationships were common. While the majority of the respondents who were in a relationship with the opposite sex said that their relationship was either very good or good, there were some for whom this was not the case. Because of this, residents in a few of the communities believed that relationships between men and women were bad.

*"The relationship good."*

*"It good so far."*

*"Poverty can break up the relationship."*

*"We quarrel sometimes."*

*"My husband does quarrel a lot."*

*"He threaten me with cutlass and I report it to the police."*

*"He used to beat me before but not now but we still quarrel plenty and curse."*

The issue of domestic violence and abuse of women, including financial abuse, raises questions about the need of the abuser to exert power and control over the victim and while only a small number of respondents admitted to being victims, it is important that steps be put in place not only to bring the abusers to justice but to also to provide support to victims.

### 4.3.3 PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

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Residents in some communities were of the opinion that family life had worsened and that relationships between parents and children were worse than before. While several parents said that they had no problems with their children, some did admit that their children were rude, disobedient and delinquent.

*"They are good children."*

*"They misbehave sometimes."*

*"They troublesome and rude."*

*"He disobedient and stubborn sometimes."*

*"They curse and fight."*

*"They curse me"*

*"The big boy don't listen."*

*"She involved in a gang."*

*"Lack of respect for parents."*

Some children also resented their parents when they could not give them the things that they wanted.

*"Children don't satisfied with what their parents can give them."*

At the same time, several parents admitted that they found it difficult to manage and discipline their children; but while some parents said that they beat their children, several others said that they scolded or deprived them of privileges. However it was also pointed out that the way that some parents talked to and treated their children was not only unacceptable, but suggested that some child rearing practices needed to be improved or changed.

*"The way parents talk to children."*

Poor parent-child relationships are not only characterized by several problems, but suggest that many parents lack good parenting skills and that there is a need for parent education.

#### **4.3.4 INTER-GENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

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Relationships between young and elderly persons are common in extended and multi-generational households. In some instances where parents are working, children are left with grandparents who are sometimes too old to really deal with their demands and what they regard as negative attitudes. At the same, time there are few activities that encourage inter-generational socializing, and it was believed that this had contributed to the generation gap.

*"There is a gap between younger persons and the elderly in the community."*

However in some cases the relationships are characterized by disrespect shown to grandmothers and/or other relatives, some of whom are aware of the factors that influence young people's behaviour. .

*"No respect... they curse me."*

*"Want to get their own way."*

*"They may say I old but we sit and discuss things."*

*"I don't always like their attitudes but it is the atmosphere in which they grow up, poverty and the ghetto."*

However in one community it was said that while there is a high level of respect towards the elderly and towards people in positions of authority, some young people show indifference towards such persons, including towards police officers.

#### 4.3.5 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS

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In several of the communities relationships between neighbours were said to be good. Neighbours shared food, clothes and sometimes money. They also cooperated with each other and sometimes assisted with house construction and house cleaning.

*"Love and care for each other."*

*"People live well and support each other."*

*"Neighbours look out for each other."*

*"My neighbour, When I don't have she give me, when I have I give her, we does cooperate with each other."*

At the same time residents in some communities identified the emphasis on individualism and regretted the loss of 'neighbourliness' and community spirit.

*"Quarrels and fights are common between neighbours."*

*"There has been an erosion of community spirit."*

*"Disputes and conflicts between neighbours could be very heated."*

*"Community spirit is lacking."*

#### 4.3.5 SUPPORT NETWORKS

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Several people also have access to and depend on family, relatives, neighbours, and friends, and on assistance from various NGOs including the churches, with which community groups work to provide help.

*"People live well and support each other in times of emergency."*

*"When people need help all of the villagers assist in whatever way they can."*

*"Neighbours look out for each other."*

Informal networks are common among young people who hang out at street corners and who display deviant behaviour and indulge in drug use and abuse. These networks are often very strong and provide support and protection for young people. In some communities, in the absence of formal networks and recreational facilities, informal groups of men, women and youth provide opportunities for social interaction and recreation.

At the same time, residents in most of the communities depended on formal networks through which they can access much-needed assistance and support. People in several of the communities also received support and assistance from various voluntary

organizations and from government agencies, and some people received assistance from relatives and friends abroad, or from the Parliamentary representative.

*"A lot of organizations help especially those who cannot work."*

*"Give hampers monthly."*

*"Remittances from family abroad."*

*"Assistance from the Parliamentary Representative."*

#### 4.4 SOCIAL PROBLEMS

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The social environment of any community can be compromised by social problems, and residents in all of the communities identified a number of social problems that are having a negative impact on their communities and about which they are concerned. Among the problems that they identified were:

- Drugs;
- Alcoholism;
- Teenage pregnancy;
- Crime;
- Prostitution;
- Indiscipline and delinquency;
- Child neglect and abuse; and
- Domestic violence.

The selling, use, and abuse of illegal drugs was identified as a serious problem by residents in all of the communities studied, and some people claimed that this had resulted from lack of employment and incomes.

*"Men are forced to engage in illegal activities due to unemployment and the general economic situation."*

However, residents in all of the communities were concerned about the large numbers of young people who were using drugs and about fact that children were also involved in selling and smoking marijuana as well as using hard drugs. While most people recognised the negative effect that the drug trade and the use of drugs were having on young people, some who did not smoke were also concerned about the effect of second-hand smoke.

*"Marijuana and crack is a serious issue."*

*"School children being used to sell drugs."*

*"It hurts to see young children smoking marijuana and taking coke."*

*"Young people go on the block and smoke."*

*"The community is drug infested."*

*"Secondhand smoke killing us."*

*"Too many young minds going astray. There is an urgent need for rehabilitation."*

Residents of Woodford Hill were concerned about the existence of drug dealers and about the belief that the community was being used as a transshipment point. Residents in Fabre/Fond St. Jean were also concerned that the bay was being used as a port of entry for drugs.

Like drugs, alcoholism was regarded as a serious problem and it was identified as such in ten of the twelve communities, in some of which it was said to be prevalent among the elderly, among youth, and among some women. While alcoholism is a health related problem most residents were concerned about the sometimes violent behaviour, including domestic violence, that follows.

*"Drug and alcohol use is rampant in the community, especially among the youth."*

*"Alcoholism and drugs is a serious problem"*

*"Abuse of alcohol is a major problem."*

*"Abuse of alcohol results in fights."*

*"High use of alcohol among young men results in conflicts among peers."*

*"That's the time when the men abuse their wives or girlfriends."*

Crime was identified as a problem in eight of the communities. However, residents in several communities said that crime was low. In those communities in which it did exist, except for praedial larceny, it was mostly burglary of houses. However, in a few of the communities, for example in Woodford Hill, crime was said to be on the increase and it was believed that this was as a result of the existence of an active drug trade.

Child neglect and abuse can take many forms including leaving children unattended or unsupervised for long periods, verbal, physical and sexual abuse of children, including incest and teenage pregnancy, and child trafficking.

While most of the interviewees said that they did not leave their children unsupervised for long periods, a few did admit that while they sometimes had to leave them for short periods they saw this as a risk. Residents in a few of the communities were of the view that keeping children away from school could be seen as neglect. On the other hand neglect was seen to result from parents' inability to provide basic needs especially food.

*"Several reported cases of child abuse."*

*"Children being left without food."*

The data show that some children were being subjected to verbal abuse and while there was no concrete evidence of physical abuse, a significant number of the interviewees used corporal punishment as disciplinary measure.

*"I does beat them and curse them."*

*"I does beat them when they get me vex."*

*"Just a little slap sometimes."*

*"I beat him sometimes."*

Another form of child abuse is child trafficking, and while it appears that this is not widespread there was one reported incident in which a woman admitted that she had sold two of her children.

*"She already sell two of her children and they now living in the states."*

The data show that verbal, physical and emotional abuse of children by parents can result from frustration and anger because of their inability to provide their children with even their basic needs. However, parents may not have viewed their actions as abuse but as strategies to manage and control their children, and in the case of selling them, as a way of providing them with an opportunity to obtain things that they could not give them.

Sexual abuse of children manifested itself in incest and the early initiation of young children into sexual activity. Although incest is said to exist in some of the communities it is said to be rampant in two, but because it is regarded as taboo and a cause for shame, it is not discussed openly. Some children may therefore be afraid of revealing it, and it is believed that some mothers cover it up.

*"Fathers using girls, brothers using girls and mothers covering it up."*

*"Incest relationships."*

*"Some mothers have to take their children and run."*

While the PPA activities did not produce any specific or concrete evidence of sexual abuse of young boys, except in incestuous relationships, it was alleged that there is a brothel in Roseau which is "staffed" by boys between the ages of 12 and 18 years, and that this was a matter of grave concern. .

At the same time several people were concerned about the level of sexual abuse of children and about the fact, according to them, that no research is being done and no action being taken to follow up on children who were being sexually abused.

*"Children sexually active at a young age."*

*"Our young children are being sexually abused."*

*"What about the future of these young children who are being abused and molested?"*

*"No research is being done."*

*"There seems to be no follow up for abused children."*

Recent research conducted by UNICEF has shown that sexual abuse of children in the Caribbean, including in Dominica, is a cause for concern. However while there are laws to protect children, during the PPA no information was obtained about whether parents or other residents in the communities were aware of these laws or of the serious physical, psychological and emotional damage that abuse can cause.

Residents in most of the communities were quite willing to talk about teenage pregnancy and this was identified as a problem in all but two of the communities studied. Information provided by residents indicated that while in some of the communities it was already high and prevalent in others it was on the increase.

*"Teenage pregnancy is prevalent in this community."*

*"Teenage pregnancy is on the increase."*

*"Teenage pregnancy is high and on the increase."*

*"There is a high rate of teenage pregnancy compared to the size of the community."*

In addition, information provided by several heads of households revealed that several of them had had their first child in their teens and that some young girls had become pregnant as young as twelve, thirteen and fourteen years of age.

*"In some cases young girls as early as twelve years become pregnant and no-one steps in to claim responsibility."*

*"I get pregnant at fourteen."*

*"We go to the men for a little dollar to buy recess or to go to school, to buy soap to wash our clothes. You may end up having a child."*

*"I was planning to go to college but I got pregnant."*

Teenage pregnancy has serious consequences for young girls because it not only affects their health but can prevent them from continuing or furthering their education; research has shown that while teenage pregnancy can result from poverty, it also contributes to and perpetuates the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

*"If it was not for poverty young women would not be exposed to pregnancy and early parenting."*

While a few people admitted that it was a problem about which they were concerned, it is alarming and a matter of grave concern that many people in several of the communities did not see it as a serious problem or as a cause for concern.

*"Teenage pregnancy is a growing problem and cause for concern."*

*"While teenage pregnancy exists there is no cause for alarm."*

*"A few teenage pregnancies, some of which the young ladies live with their boyfriends."*

*"There are incidences of teenage pregnancy but it does not seem to be a very serious problem."*

These statements suggest that this phenomenon may now be so common in some communities that it is becoming "accepted and acceptable," and that therefore no action is being taken to avoid it. At the same time, while carnal knowledge of a minor is a crime, there was no evidence to show that the males who had impregnated underaged teenage girls had been brought to justice.

While prostitution was identified as a social problem, several women also regarded it as a survival strategy, and even though they realised that it put them at risk of contracting STDs and HIV/AIDS, several said that it was an option that would allow them to provide for their children.

*"Poverty contributes to prostitution."*

*"Prostitution exposes you to a lot of things like AIDS."*

*"I take man, I could get AIDS and probably die already."*

*"Selling body for five dollars."*

*"Prostitution is being done but is hidden."*

*"We know we does it but we don't look at it like prostitution because to us that is a kind of job."*

The emergence and presence of gangs in various communities is a growing concern and the increase in violence and criminal activity has been linked to their existence. While they may be present in some of the communities studied and residents may not have mentioned them, there is evidence that they are present in Roseau, in some villages, and in some schools. Within Roseau and its environs alone nine gangs have been identified and while they are mainly comprised of males, it is alleged that some females are associated with and involved with male members of these gangs. However while attempts are being made to prevent and curb their activities, these have been hampered by limited resources, including limited human resources within the law enforcement agencies and lack of rehabilitation facilities.

Table 4.1 illustrates the distribution of selected social problems among the communities.

COUNTRY POVERTY ASSESSMENT  
Dominica 2008/09

Table 4.1: Social Problems

Problem	Bel	Car	Dub	Fab	Gut	Pen	Pte	Ros	Sal	Sil	Sou	Wo
Drugs	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Alcoholism	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	-	x	-	x	x
Teenage pregnancy	x	x	x	-	x	x	x	x	-	x	x	x
Crime	x	x	-	x	x	-	x	x	-	x	-	x
Prostitution	x	-	-	-	x	x	-	x	-	x	-	x
Child abuse	-	x	-	-	x	x	x	-	-	-	-	x
Indiscipline & delinquency	x	x	x	-	x	x	x	-	-	-	x	x
Domestic violence	-	x	-	-	x	x	x	-	-	-	-	-

Key: Bel = Bellevue, Car = Carib Territory, Dub = Dubic, Gut = Gutter/Tarish Pit, Pen = Penville, Pte = Petite Soufriere/San Sauveur/Good Hope, Ros = Roseau Central, Sal = Salisbury, Sil = Silver Lake, Sou = Soufriere/Scottshead/Gallion, Woo = Woodford Hill

The number and severity of social problems that are present in the various communities, not only have serious implications for the social dimension of life in the communities, but certain undesirable activities are often seen as survival strategies for individuals, households and vulnerable groups. The data suggest that children, youth and women, especially those who are single parents are vulnerable because they are involved in, or are victims of a number of unwholesome activities that put them at great risk. The data also show that involvement in such activities is often because of poverty, and that many of the women and young people who are engaged in them regard them as “work” from which they can earn money to sustain their livelihoods.

While some initiatives are being taken to deal with some specific social problems, it would appear that these are either not sufficient or that they have not been successful in reducing or eliminating them. Given the large number of social problems identified by residents and the serious negative impact that they are having on communities, and given the residents’ concerns about the problems, more aggressive and vigorous steps must be taken by government agencies as well as by civil society organizations to implement more and various types of preventative and remedial programmes designed to address a wide range of social problems.

## SECTION 5: THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

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The data show that most people are interested in the political dimension, that there is a high degree of participation in political activities, and that allegiance to a particular political party is strong. In some of the communities there are branches of various political parties, but while they are usually more active prior to or at election time, after elections, animosity between supporters of different parties can last for a long time. Such political differences can sometimes polarise and create rifts within communities and even within some families, and according to residents in Woodford Hill such differences have hindered development of the community.

In Salisbury, allegiance to one or other political party is well recognised and some residents were of the view that they and the community were being ignored by the government because of their political allegiance. In some of the other communities, including Gutter/Tarish Pit, Petite Soufriere/Sans Sauveur/Good Hope and Woodford Hill, residents felt politicians had not responded to their cries for help and that they were being ignored by their Parliamentary Representative.

*"Politicians do not listen to our pleas for help."*

*"The community is not represented in the House."*

In the Carib Territory the Carib Council is responsible for addressing issues that are important to the residents, but discord and rivalry hampers its effectiveness.

At the local level in every community there are a number of leaders and persons with influence who hold key positions in national institutions and local community organizations. In many cases local leaders are at the forefront of initiatives to develop their communities. In Woodford Hill the Youth Skill Training Programme provides residents with opportunities to acquire and develop leadership skills.

*"There are several young leaders who are displaying leadership skills."*

*"The local council is headed by a very young and dynamic individual in his early twenties."*

### 5.1 THE CULTURAL DIMENSION

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On the whole the communities adhered to and practised the national culture. They observe national holidays, festivals and celebrations in which people engage in cultural dances and eat traditional foods. At the same time in Dubic and Woodford Hill the rich African heritage is celebrated mainly through dances like the bele and quadrille.

One aspect of the culture is its basis in Christian beliefs. Norms, values and beliefs have emerged out of residents' faith; while Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion there are also several Protestant religions, and residents celebrate festivals of the various religions that are present in their communities. In Woodford Hill and in Salisbury it was said that because of the presence of many Haitian migrants there is a strong belief in Obeah, however in Penville there was a recognition that the older generation still believed in superstitions and that this had influenced how they relate to and interact with each other.

Some communities have also developed several specific cultural characteristics and relevant celebrations, including Fish Fest in Soufriere/Sans Sauveur/Good Hope, and Carib Week in the Carib Territory.

While residents in the Carib Territory celebrated all national holidays and participate in national festivals and celebrations, their culture had characteristics that make it different from that in other communities. Despite historical setbacks, their Kalingo culture is still strong and among its norms are belief in a supreme being, appreciation of family and relatives, and respect for elders. In addition there is a belief in the influence of phases of the moon, and that these determine when several important activities, including weaning of babies, planting of crops and cutting of trees are undertaken. There is also a belief in the existence of spirits in trees and in the use of herbal medicines. Death and burials are handled according to traditional rituals, but residents believed that the emergence of funeral homes had had an adverse effect on the traditional way in which these events were handled.

## 5.2 CHANGES IN THE COMMUNITIES

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During the community workshops residents identified and discussed changes that had taken place in their communities over the last ten years, the reasons for the changes and their impact. They also ranked the changes in terms of whether they were better, worse or the same now or as they were then. In most cases workshop participants were divided into two groups – younger and older people. The older people reminisced on the “good old days” and the many changes, good and bad, that had taken place in their communities. Many of the younger participants were surprised to learn about how their communities were previously and the many changes that had taken place.

Residents in communities like Salisbury were of the view that the general standard of living had improved. They identified better infrastructure including better roads, more street lights, bigger and better houses and better transportation. However, in several other communities this was not always the case and residents pointed to a number of improvements that were still needed.

*"The road in Galleon need urgent attention."*

In most of the communities there are now more basic facilities, including electricity, pipe-borne water, transportation; access to technology is now widely available. However in some communities like Fabre the water supply was still inadequate and there were often interruptions in the electricity supply. Residents in several of the other communities also commented on the high cost of electricity and said while it was available, because of the high cost some people were not able to afford it.

*"I couldn't pay so they cut my lights."*

*"The cost of electricity so high we can no longer afford to pay."*

At the same time the data show that while there had been improvement in the size and quality of housing in some of the communities, in Silver Lake housing had not changed in decades. In addition in several of the there were still neither proper private nor public toilet facilities.

*"The core houses are in a deplorable condition with no toilet facilities."*

A significant change identified by everyone was the introduction and widespread use of technology. Mobile phones were common and many people owned them. Computers were not only available, but secondary school students were expected to have access to them. However, not all parents could afford them and this put their children at a disadvantage. On the other hand, residents in a few communities including Soufriere/Scottshead/Galleon were concerned about the effect of technology.

*"Cable television is available."*

*"The technology taking over."*

While people acknowledged that there had been some positive changes in the physical and material dimension of life in their communities, they realised that in the economic and social spheres things had got worse. Residents in some of the rural communities referred to the decline in agriculture, to the absence of markets and to an increase in praedial larceny, all of which affected their ability to earn a good income from farming. Other contributing factors cited were access to land and young people's lack of interest in agriculture.

*"Farming has gone down considerably."*

*"The attitude of young people to agriculture."*

*"Few young people are in agriculture."*

Residents in most of the communities were of the view that the economic situation had worsened. They pointed to the high cost of living, and to fewer job opportunities, as well as to the high levels of unemployment that now exist. Consequently several people did not have enough money to meet their basic needs.

However, everyone recognised and lauded the increase in the number of educational opportunities for secondary and university education, and the number of people who were now better educated.

*"Universal education provides opportunities for every child to pursue higher education."*

However although the number of professionals has increased, residents in the Carib territory were of the view that many of these were unable to utilise their knowledge and skills because of lack of employment opportunities in the Territory. At the same time residents in Penville were of the view that there were more job opportunities for women.

Residents in all of the communities were of the view that over the last ten years family life had deteriorated, that people had lost respect for others, and that this was especially so in the case of intergenerational relationships. There was also a belief that because of selfishness community spirit had been eroded.

*"Family life conditions are worse."*

*"There is an increase in single parent households."*

*"Marriages are falling apart."*

*"Lots of problems among parents and children."*

*Relationship between parent and children is worse than before."*

*"Less cooperation between people."*

*"Young people do not respect the older people so older people are not so concerned about the youth."*

Everyone commented on the recent existence of gangs and on the increase in the trafficking and use of drugs and their attendant ills. Some also commented on the increase in the number of sex workers, and on the competition in the field between local and foreign sex workers.

*"Cocaine is destroying people, causing them to turn paro and to do all sorts of things to satisfy their habit."*

*"Before there were only local sex workers, but now they are so many foreign sex workers that they are preventing me from making the amount of money I used to make."*

## SECTION 6: POVERTY AND WEALTH

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### 6.1 DEFINITION, TYPES AND LEVELS OF POVERTY

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By participating in the various PPA activities residents in every community had opportunities to express their views about the levels of wealth and poverty in their communities. 'Poverty' and 'poor' not only describe conditions under which people are living but they also have a certain stigma attached that can make those who are categorized as poor feel embarrassed and ashamed and lead them to deny that they were poor. Evidence of this can be seen by the comments made by some respondents who while they considered themselves to be poor did not like to be labelled poor but preferred to be called less fortunate. They justified the use of this term to define relative poverty because they believed that even though they were poor, when they compared themselves they were better off than some others.

*"I don't like to hear the word poverty, I like to hear less fortunate."*

*"People in Penville are not poor but less fortunate."*

*"I hate to hear people talk about Penville like it is a poor place, Penville has less fortunate people but we are not poor."*

*"I do not like to hear the word poor."*

*"Less fortunate because 75% to 80% of the people have roof over their head compared to what I see on TV."*

*"Not poor but unfortunate, there are communities that are poorer."*

*"The degrading part of poverty, we don't have that in Penville."*

All respondents agreed that poverty is a situation in which people cannot meet their basic needs or provide for their families. In addition to basic needs they identified several other factors that contribute to poverty including unemployment, lack of money, and single parents with large numbers of children, and lack of access to resources.

*"Can't meet basic needs, no food, clothes or shelter."*

*"Can't provide three meals a day."*

*"When you have a family and cannot provide their needs."*

*"Our children go to school without anything thing much to eat."*

*"Poor housing."*

*"Women with large numbers of children and can't leave them to go to work."*

*"No access to agricultural land."*

During the community workshops residents identified indicators that would indicate whether people were poor or rich and the factors that contributed to these phenomena. They also were provided with an indicator matrix that focuses on the following four indicators: financial status, food security, housing and health, and asked to estimate the number of persons in their communities that were either very poor, poor, better off or rich. While everyone found that using the matrix was not very helpful in estimating numbers, they did agree that these indicators could provide some idea about levels of poverty and wealth.

Workshop participants in every community said that economic factors like employment, type of job, amount of income, and cost of living were important in determining whether people were poor, better off, or rich. However it was pointed out that even some who were employed and earning a regular income faced financial difficulties because of the high cost of living.

*"The majority of the poor are those who don't work or can't get work."*

*"No money to buy food and other things we need."*

*"Someone might be working but might not be financially secure."*

*"You can be getting a salary that low, eh."*

*"Whether you are a teacher or a police officer, because of the high cost of living you could still encounter financial difficulties."*

*"Look wealthy but pockets are empty."*

Housing was also seen as an indicator. However while residents identified the type and condition of house, the size and the number of persons relative to the size was seen as an important indicator and in some of the communities like Silver Lake and housing is inadequate.

*"The long house is a failure."*

*"Persons are living in poor housing conditions."*

*"A few persons live in small shacks."*

*"The housing situation is a problem, most of the houses are in a dilapidated condition."*

*"Some houses are in need of repair, others just need to be broken down and rebuilt."*

At the same time, some people said using housing as an indicator would not necessarily provide an accurate picture of the level of poverty in a community because having a big house was not always a good indicator as the owners may be finding it difficult to pay the mortgage.

*"Some may have a big house but be not able to maintain it."*

*"A house can make you become poor when you are not able to meet the mortgage."*

Health status including sufficient food and good nutrition and ability to afford good health care, was also seen as an indicator, but as with the other indicators, just looking would not provide accurate assessment of a person's level of poverty or wealth.

*"People might look healthy but be sick."*

*"You may not have enough to eat."*

*"Can't provide for their health."*

However, while residents in all of the communities did agree that while there were some people who were very poor, some people said that these were few in number. There was a general agreement in most of the communities that while there might be some residents who were better off, very few if any residents were rich. Most people therefore believed that the majority of people in their communities were either poor or better off, but residents in Silver Lake agreed that everybody in the community was either very poor or poor, and the data show that there is acute severe poverty in this community.

*"Everyone fell in the poor bracket."*

*"Some are very poor they have nothing they have to depend on welfare."*

Residents in Soufriere/Scottshead/Galleon agreed that there were pockets of poverty in their community, but in Penville the view was that while a significant number of persons were better off in terms of housing, several people were poor in the areas of food security. While residents in Bellevue Chopin said that the community as a whole was not poor, they did agree that there was a small number of households that were very poor because they could not house, feed and clothe themselves.

No-one in Fabre/St. Jean was said to be very poor, however several were poor in terms of health and housing but better off in terms of food security. At the same time there was a perception that in Gutter/Tarish Pit a significant number of persons were poor in terms of income and health, but there were some who were better off in terms of housing and in food security.

The four indicators on the matrix served as guides and they were used by workshop participants to come up with estimates based on their perceptions of conditions in their communities. The information that they provided showed that residents in several of the communities studied were aware that there were significant levels of poverty in their communities, and that residents in Silver Lake all agree that there was severe poverty in their community. On the other hand information provided by residents in Salisbury and suggests that there are several persons who could be considered to be better off, and this included returning nationals.

One important outcome of the exercise was the realization that even with identifiable indicators it is not always possible to accurately estimate various levels of poverty and wealth in a community.

The design of the PPA and the inclusion of a number of activities in which community residents participated was based on the understanding of the importance of using a number of assessment tools to gain an accurate picture and understanding of the factors that determine the levels of poverty and wealth that exist in communities.

Information provided by residents in the various PPA activities highlighted the existence and severity of various types and levels of poverty in all of the communities. For example, there was evidence of public poverty, because in spite of many improvements in the physical infrastructure and of an increase in the number of facilities in most of the communities, in many of them housing, roads and drainage, were in need of urgent repairs or upgrading and facilities and services were inadequate to meet the needs of community members.

In a number of the communities individual and household poverty were severe. Because of unemployment and/or low levels of employment several individuals did not have access to money they needed to meet even their own basic needs and this included some who were not able to eat on a regular basis, much less to eat nutritious meals. This was particularly true for families with children and for some elderly persons; the data show that some individuals and a significant number of families in several of the communities depended on assistance from the Welfare Department and from NGOs for their survival.

Residents in several communities were well aware of the existence of relative poverty and interviews with individuals and with heads of households revealed instances of absolute poverty and of intergenerational poverty. Evidence of the latter can be seen in the case studies provided in the report. At the same time, residents, especially in communities where fishing was an important activity, talked about seasonal poverty and the difficulties that they faced in meeting their needs in the “off” season.

Residents identified several factors that contribute to and perpetuate poverty; while the majority cited limited number of jobs and job opportunities, unemployment and lack of money as major contributors to poverty, the data show that there were also other factors. Among these were the high cost of living, lack of ownership and/or access to land, lack of access to markets for agricultural produce, large numbers of persons with few marketable skills, significant numbers of single parent families, low levels of education of some heads of households and some older community members, absenteeism from school among some poorer children, inability of some to access or afford high quality health care, stigmatization of some communities and social exclusion of their residents.

## 6.2 EXPERIENCE, EFFECT AND IMPACT OF POVERTY

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Many people in all of the communities were aware that poverty existed in the country and in their communities, as well as of the causes of poverty and of the negative impact that poverty can have on individuals, groups and households and on the communities as a whole.

*"There is a lot of poverty in this island not only in Woodford Hill."*

*"There is no employment, nothing for people to do."*

*"What cause a lot of poverty in Dominica is VAT on food."*

*"The food price in the shop is too high for us we cannot reach it."*

*"The groceries too expensive, that causing a lot of poverty in the country."*

However there were those in some of the communities who were adamant that there was no poverty in their communities, and they resented being seen as or being called poor.

*"We do not have poverty in Tarish Pit."*

*"The degrading part of poverty we don't have that in Penville."*

*"Penville not poor."*

According to respondents, women, children and elderly persons are most affected by poverty; children and elderly persons because they have to depend on others for their survival and women because they have the responsibility for providing for their families. Information that they provided also shows the ways in which these vulnerable groups were affected by poverty.

Children living in poverty can suffer from malnutrition, often have to miss school, their health needs, including items such as eyeglasses cannot be met, and their development may be stunted. Furthermore in order to survive some may become involved in illegal activities.

A significant number of women, especially single mothers with large numbers of children who were living in poverty faced many challenges in providing for their families. Many were unemployed or could not find jobs so they often did not have money or enough money that would allow them to live comfortably or to provide food and other necessities for their children. Being solely responsible for their families was a burden that often resulted in stress and anxiety and affected their health. Their health was also being affected by some of the risks that they took to survive and provide. Among these were serial mating and having children for more than one man and the possibility of contracting STIs or HIV/AIDS, as well as increasing their dependency on

men and being subjected to abuse and violence. Some have also turned to prostitution, drugs and other illegal activities like stealing.

Several elderly persons lived alone and had no-one to provide for or to look after them. While some did receive a small pension this was often insufficient to meet their needs. Because of failing health several were unable to help themselves and had to depend on others, including relatives, friends, neighbours and the church for their survival.

While respondents did say that poverty had the worst effect on children, women and elderly persons, they realised that it also had a negative effect on men, youth and people with disabilities. Several poor men were often unemployed and unable to provide for their families; while some people were of the view that such men did not care, a number of these men were concerned about their inability to provide for their families. While several poor men did try to gain some level of employment by doing odd jobs, fishing and planting some crops, several others turned to alcohol and other illegal drugs.

Many young people living in poverty are also unemployed and the data show that some turn to alcohol, and that large numbers of them become involved in the drug trade and other illegal activities. Others engage in risky sexual behaviours and several young girls became pregnant.

People with disabilities who lived in poverty were especially hard-hit and according to some were the poorest of the poor and suffered the worst. Not only were many living in poor conditions, could not help themselves and had to depend on others or on social welfare for their survival, but they were often discriminated against and their special needs were not being met. In some cases families were unwilling to take responsibility for members who had a disability and in most of the communities there were few if any facilities or services that catered for persons with disabilities.

While in a few communities poverty was said to have had very little effect, respondents in several others identified its negative impact on life and living. They were of the view that poverty had resulted in their having a very low standard of living, had affected their economic and social life because it had prevented businesses from profiting and several people from participating in social activities, and that it had caused the community to be stigmatised and discriminated against. Some also felt that the poor had become a burden to the community.

At the same time there was a feeling that some people had become so used to being poor that they accepted it, felt that they had little choice, and had therefore become apathetic and unwilling to take initiatives to improve their situation. This, they felt, had encouraged and perpetuated dependency.

## **6.3 POVERTY ALLEVIATION INITIATIVES**

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During interviews with heads of households, interviewees identified several initiatives that had been undertaken by government institutions and by the Christian Children's Fund. In their view these initiatives had helped to alleviate the poverty that was being experienced by some households.

Poverty alleviation initiatives taken by the government included implementation of infrastructural and housing projects, a school bus service to provide cheaper transportation for school children, a school meals programme, and the provision of social assistance through the Social Welfare Department. The Christian Children's fund provided assistance to children in poor households, including provision of school uniforms and school books.

### **6.3.1 GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN VARIOUS COMMUNITIES**

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#### **Housing**

Carib Territory, Roseau/Hillsborough Street, Tarish Pit, Fabre, Gutter, Bellevue Chopin

#### **Roads**

Bellevue Chopin, Carib Territory, Sans Sauver, Silver Lake

#### **Water Project**

Carib Territory

#### **Schools**

Carib Territory, Sans Sauver

#### **Health Centre/Mini Hospital**

Petite Soufriere, Carib Territory

#### **School Meals**

Penville

### **School Bus**

Sans Sauver, Good Hope, Carib Territory,

### **Adult Education Programme**

Gutter

### **Social Welfare**

Penville, Good Hope, Tarish Pit, Salisbury

### **NGO Initiatives**

**Rotary Club:** Public bath and toilet in Silver Lake

**Christian Children's Fund:** Uniform and books to children in Penville, Carib Territory, Good Hope, Tarish Pit

**Women's Club:** Poultry project in Penville.

In spite of these initiatives Heads of Households in some communities expressed frustration and disappointment that they had not benefited from any poverty alleviation initiatives. They cited the following reasons.

### **No Initiatives**

*"Nobody doing anything here."*

*"Government doing nothing."*

*"I don't see anything."*

*"Don't know of anything."*

### **Broken Promises**

*"For years they come with empty promises."*

*"They promised to build me a house but I don't know when."*

*"They said they would help but I don't see anybody."*

### **Discrimination**

*"Nothing here yet but everywhere else get."*

*"Government helping poor people and elderly people, I old but I never benefit."*

### **Waiting Long For Help**

*"They have my name but I don't get anything yet."*

*"My mother apply but they tell her she have to wait her turn."*

## 6.4 QUALITY OF LIFE AND SENSE OF WELL BEING

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A good standard of living and a good quality of life contribute to a sense of well being. Quality of life and sense of well being are usually influenced by the standard that is expected and acceptable by the society at large, but they are also determined by physical and material, social, economic factors, as well as by spiritual, emotional and psychological factors.

During the community workshops, residents plotted graphs on a Wheel of Well Being and indicated on a Quality of Life Index the levels of well being and the quality of life that they enjoy.

On the Wheel of Well Being residents plotted graphs to show the level of physical and material, of economic, of social, and of spiritual, emotional and psychological well being that they enjoy, and on the Quality of Life Index they rated specific aspects of each of these dimensions to show whether they were very low, low, average, high or very high. The process of assessing the sense of well being and of deciding what weight to allocate to the various indicators created a great deal of discussion that allowed participants to express their views and to listen to those of others. On the whole information on the graphs on the Wheel of Well Being and the ratings given on the Quality of Life Index show that in many communities people seemed to be satisfied with the quality of their life and had a fairly good sense of well being.

However when the information provided on the graphs and the index were analysed some of it contrasted widely with information generated from other PPA activities.

### 6.4.1 THE PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL

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In the physical and material aspects of life, housing was rated very low in Silver Lake and low in Fabre/Fond St. Jean, Petite Soufriere, Sans Sauveur and Good Hope; it was rated average in Roseau and in the Carib Territory, and between low and average in Gutter/Tarish Pit; however, it was rated high in Woodford Hill, Penville, Dubic, and Soufriere/Scotts Head/Galleon, and very high in Salisbury. The ratings on food and clothing suggest that these are available, but that clothing was more readily available. Facilities were rated low in Dubic, in Soufriere/Scotts Head and Galleon, in Silver Lake and in the Carib Territory, =, but average in Penville, and Woodford Hill and high in Roseau and Salisbury. In terms of the physical environment, most people rated this average or high but it was rated low in Gutter/Tarish Pit and in the Carib Territory. It would therefore appear that people in many of the several of the communities have a sense of well being and are fairly satisfied with the- quality of the physical and material aspects of their lives.

## 6.4.2 THE ECONOMIC

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Job opportunities, jobs and employment were rated between very low and low in eight of the communities, and wages low to average in all. Remittances were low in five communities, average in Roseau, Penville and the Carib Territory and high in Woodford Hill. Access to land provides people with the potential to earn an income and the ratings showed that this was rated high in four of the rural communities and very low in five, including the urban and suburban communities. These ratings show that on the whole the economic aspect of life in the communities was low and suggest that many residents did not have or were unable to access sufficient money to meet their basic and other needs.

## 6.4.3 SOCIAL

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Because it is within families that individuals first learn how to interact and relate with others, relationships between family members are important, but only in three communities was family life given a high rating. In four communities it seen as average and in three it was rated low. Only in the Carib Territory was education rated low, and while in five communities it was rated average and in three it was rated high on the Wheel of Well Being. On the Quality of Life Index tertiary education, technical and vocational education, and adult education were given low and very low ratings. This suggests that ratings on the Wheel might have been influenced by the availability and access of universal primary and secondary education.

In most of the communities health was rated average, and only in two was it rated low. However, on the Quality of Life Index, balanced diet and mental health were rated low or very low in seven of the communities.

In several of the communities, including Dubic, Soufriere/Scotshead/Galleon, Woodford Hill, Fabre/St. Jean and the Carib Territory, residents gave crime and violence a low rating. In Gutter/Tarish Pit crime was rated low but violence high, and in Salisbury and Penville violence was rated low and crime average. However crime and violence were both rated high in the urban and suburban communities of Roseau and in Silver Lake.

## 6.4.4 SPIRITUAL, EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

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A great deal of emphasis is usually not paid to this aspect of well being, but it is probably the most important factor in ensuring a sense of well being. However, it is also important to recognise that it is influenced by the physical and material, by the

economic and the social aspects of life. In addition to moral values, attitudes, self-esteem and self-confidence, independence, and a sense of security all contribute to a sense of well being, so too does participation in community activities.

On the Wheel, only in two communities were moral values rated high. They were rated low in five communities and average in four. Attitudes were rated high in two communities, average in six and low in three. Self-esteem and self-confidence were rated high in five communities, average in two and low in three, dependency was low in five and high in four; a sense of security was rated high in four, average in three and low in two. Ratings given on the Quality of Life Index, show that in all communities participation in church activities was high. In a few communities participation in political activity and in recreation leisure activities was also rated high, however participation in community groups and community projects was rated low in several communities.

On completion of all of the workshop activities, participants had an opportunity to analyse and interpret all of the information that they had provided and that the workshop activities had generated. In some cases this activity was not done because all of the participants were anxious to leave; in others although several had left, those who remained did analyse the data.

In analysing the data, some participants realised that there was a relationship between unemployment and migration and unemployment and existence problems like drugs and violence. However they also realised that few organizations were addressing these problems.

In looking at the organizations that were implementing programmes in communities, they felt that while some like Christian Children's Fund were providing support, they were not providing opportunities. At the same time they recognised that the Basic Needs Trust Fund only provided short-term employment. They were concerned that many institutions were mainly concerned with giving handouts and that this perpetuated a dependency syndrome.

## **6.5 POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND REDUCTION**

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Analysis of the data provided by residents in various PPA activities and of reports of plans and projects revealed some initiatives that had been taken by government agencies and by NGOs to improve living conditions and to alleviate poverty in some of the communities. The initiatives included community projects and programmes that improved infrastructure and increased services as well as provision of assistance and much-needed resources to poor individuals and households. See Table: 6.1 below

COUNTRY POVERTY ASSESSMENT  
Dominica 2008/09

Table 6.1: Some Poverty Alleviation Initiatives

Community	What Has Been/Is Being Done
BellevueChopin	Bus shelter, school yard paved, improved network, improved water supply, agri-tourism project, training young people as tour guides,
Carib territory	Assistance for elderly and sick, Child development centre, cray fisher platform, road construction, government housing programme, house repairs, school bus, free text books and uniforms for children, boat building,
Dubic	Resource centre, road improvement, skills training programme
Fabre/St. Jean	Road improvement
Gutter/Tarish Pit	Refurbishing of public bath and wash area, resource centre
Penville	More houses built, work in construction in Portsmouth
Petite Soufriere/ Sans Sauveur/Good Hope	Computer resource and internet centre, computer classes, road constructed, school bus
Roseau	Access to facilities and education programmes in the city
Salisbury	Improved housing
Silver Lake	Development of girls' rounders team, development of some sporting and cultural activities, building of public toilet
Soufriere/Scottshead/Galleon	Dam cleaned monthly, housing programme, small business development, improved transportation, fishermen investing in new boats, assistance for school children
Woodford Hill	Monthly allowance to less fortunate, assistance to for school children for text books, transportation and examination fees

Residents in many of the communities acknowledged that some of these initiatives had made a difference to them, their families and to the community as a whole, but many were of the view that they had not been sufficient and that much more needed to be done to alleviate and reduce poverty. The data do show that the initiatives had improved living conditions in several of the communities. However in spite of this, there is a significant amount of poverty, some of it severe, that still exists in communities like Silver Lake, Roseau and Dubic, and of pockets of poverty in others like Gutter/Tarish Pit, Fabre/St. Jean, and Petite Soufriere/San Sauveur/Good Hope.

## 6.6 COMMUNITY NEEDS

People in all of the communities identified problems that they were experiencing, issues about which they were concerned and actions that in their view were needed to improve the quality of their lives and the conditions under which they were living. Table 6.2 below shows the needs identified by residents in each of the communities.

While there a wide variety of needs was identified, they can be grouped into:

- Basic needs;
- Infrastructural needs;
- Employment needs;
- Financial needs;
- Resource needs;
- Social needs;
- Educational needs;
- Health needs; and
- Recreational needs.

Table 6.2: Community Needs

COMMUNITIES	NEEDS
Bellevue Chopin	Basic necessities, access to land, proper housing, higher incomes, more education,
Carib Territory	Jobs for youth, more access to credit, better care for the physically challenged, better garbage disposal, better drainage and disposal of water waste, better toilet facilities, better use of the health facility, a dental service, more involvement of the Carib chief and the Ministry of Carib Affairs in the development of the community
Dubic	Creation and availability of more jobs, better housing, improved infrastructure, technical and vocational skills training programmes for males and females, Restructure the Village Improvement Committee, Access to land, Continuing education for dropouts, Family life education, counselling for adults and youth, Completion of resource centre, implementation of micro projects
Fabre/St. Jean	More available land, more access to land, better infrastructure, more employment, more education, skills training, more sale for Bay Oil, to lower the degree of poverty and deprivation
Gitter/Tarish Pit	More employment, skills training programmes, better recreational facilities, counselling for children, increase public assistance and give it on time, organizations working in the community to do more, concrete

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COMMUNITIES	NEEDS
	slab across the ravine, a summer programme for children, take planned parenthood programme to high schools, pay the guy cleaning the ravine
Penville	A nurse to be available every day, more visits by the doctor, medication to be available in the health centre, better toilet facilities, public cemetery, bus stop, better recreational facilities, adult education programmes, money
Petite Soufriere/San Sauveur/Good Hope	Make electricity more affordable, better toilet facilities, better garbage disposal, better drainage, public toilet, more visits by the Environmental Health Officer, improved personal hygiene, money playing field, more assistance to the elderly, markets for agricultural produce
Roseau	Remove VAT from food, price control, increase in police presence, school attendance officers, litter wardens to be more visible, regularize times of garbage collection, get rid of stray dogs, Compulsory health insurance
Salisbury	Roads repaired, maintenance of feeder roads, more youth groups, a village council, community centre, improved water system, more jobs, covering for green house farmers
Silver Lake	Money, more job opportunities, better housing, public toilets, more street lights, wall along the river to protect houses, more stand pipes, a fire hydrant, community centre, school bus, bus shelter, better playing field, more assistance from welfare department and other agencies, more visits from Social Workers, skills training programme for youth, adult education and literacy programmes, parenting programmes, HIV/AIDS and drug prevention programmes, more visits by the Parliamentary Representative
Soufriere/Scottshead/Galleon	More jobs for youth, skill training facility, recreational facilities, better houses, in Galleon, improved road network, more adult education programmes, remove VAT on prescription drugs, better relationship between the Council and the community
Woodford Hill	Create employment, community/resource centre, income generating programmes, day care centre for the elderly, sessions on healthy lifestyles and eating habits, increased police patrol, inclusion in the housing revolution project

## 6.7 THE GROUPS

Poverty and deprivation does not mean the same thing to everyone and different groups of people experience poverty and are affected by it in different ways. It is therefore important to capture the differences in perceptions and experience of poverty, and to identify the specific concerns, needs and priorities of different groups especially those that are most vulnerable. It is for these reasons that focus group discussions were conducted separately with men, with women, with unemployed persons, with elderly

persons, and with young people under the age of twenty-five. A total of eight hundred and thirty-nine persons participated in these focus group discussions.

During the focus group discussions each group defined and articulated their experience of poverty and deprivation, shared information about the survival strategies they use to sustain their livelihoods, and identified its particular concerns, needs and priorities. As a result, various perspectives of and attitudes to poverty were captured and a better understanding was gained about the experience of poverty and its impact on people of different ages, gender, and level of education.

### 6.7.1 MEN

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In the twelve communities one hundred and sixty three men participated in focus group discussions. Just over one third of these were between forty-six and fifty-five years of age and nearly forty percent were married. Sixty-seven of them were farmers, thirty were fishermen, eighteen were civil servants, twelve worked in construction and a few were vendors, some were self-employed but some were also unemployed. Eighty-four of them had a primary education, but eleven had secondary education; a small number had some level of post-secondary education.

#### 6.7.1.1 Perception, Experience and Effect of Poverty

All of the men believed that poverty was inability to meet basic needs but they also said that this was often because of the lack of financial resources that resulted from lack of employment.

*"Not being able to meet your needs."*

*"Our problem is food, no food it really hard."*

*"We hungry."*

*"My house is like a fowl cage. I need to finish it."*

*"Poverty is a situation when you can't meet daily needs."*

*"When you don't have the basic necessities of life."*

*"Not having sufficient resources needed for daily survival."*

*"Lack of work."*

*"When you without a job."*

*"No jobs."*

*"The pocket not fat."*

*"You haven't got money, you cannot buy sugar, you cannot buy clothes..."*

*"When income and expenditure don't match."*

*"If you don't have money in your pocket you have to stay without."*

Some also saw poverty as having nothing and struggling to survive and several mentioned the high cost of living was contributing to their poverty.

*"When you don't have nothing."*

*"Struggling to build up yourself."*

*"Having to struggle in order to make ends meet."*

*"Once a person has to struggle that's being poor."*

*"The cost of living high."*

*"Every day prices going up and I not even able to buy a pound of sugar."*

*The VAT killing people."*

*"Before I used to give my wife \$600 and she could buy a lot more,*

*"We worse than hand to mouth, it not enough to pay the bills."*

*"If you don't have money in your pocket you have to stay without."*

*"Everything going up, up, up, and you going down, down, down."*

*"I am really scared about the high inflation rate."*

However a few of the men admitted that being employed and receiving a salary did not always guarantee survival, and they pointed out that in order to survive, some people even when working at more than one job, still found it difficult to survive.

*"It have people that working for hundreds of dollars a month but they still poor."*

*"Some working in three or four jobs just to be able to make ends meet."*

Several men described poverty as a sickness, as a crime and as misery.

*"Poverty is a royal sickness."*

*"It is an ill."*

*"When you not working is a form of sickness, is just as when you sick."*

*"Poverty is a disease."*

*"Poverty is like a cancer it just like a virus, you cannot buy sugar, you cannot buy clothes."*

*"Poverty is misery."*

*"I really believe poverty is a crime."*

A few recognised that poverty could also be psychological.

*"Poverty is a state of mind, if you think poor you stay poor."*

*"Poverty is a mental disease."*

*"Stress, being stressed and a lot of misery."*

While a small number were of the view that poverty was caused by laziness some others disagreed.

*"Poverty is a form of laziness."*

*"I would not say it is a form of laziness because some people who are poor work every day, but what they work for is spend and they live from hand to mouth."*

A small number of men said that they were not poor mainly because they were able to meet their needs and also because there were others who were poorer than they were.

*"We are not poor but we need things."*

*"I am not poor because I work and am making a living, I can feed myself, and I can send my children to school."*

*"No I am not poor. I have life and strength and I can make a day's work."*

*"I can meet my daily necessities."*

*"I am a pensioner, I feel I can maintain myself so far."*

*"I don't need anything. I feel I am alright."*

At the same time while some men said that they had come from poor families, a few said that through education, the ability to obtain a job and hard work they had been able to move out of poverty.

*"When I was a little boy I had nothing, now I can say I have a little house."*

*"I brought up in a poor family, but I decided that I did not want to remain as my parents, I had to work hard to remove myself from the state of poverty and to reach where I am."*

*"As a kid I didn't have the necessities I have now, but because I now have an education and a job I work hard to provide for myself."*

*"As you grow up you realise that you have to do something about it, to move on from one level to the next."*

A significant number of the men did agree that they were poor. They shared their experience of poverty and talked about how being poor was affecting their lives.

*"We all poor there is nothing for us."*

*"Of course we are poor. Look around, see the houses some have no electricity, some can't afford water."*

*"I cannot take care of myself, not even to buy a shoe."*

*"I don't have money to buy tools to work."*

*"I am poor, I am unable to push forward."*

*"We are poor, income is low."*

*"I am extremely poor, I can't help myself; I am on death's boundary."*

*"Yes because I am unemployed."*

*"I am more than poor."*

There is a general perception about the irresponsibility of men, but all of the men who participated in the focus group discussions accepted that they had a responsibility to provide for and to maintain their families. However they all said that, poverty often prevented them from doing so.

*"My home is my first priority."*

*"I am the one to bring in the food and to provide for my family."*

*"The man must provide for his family but unemployment has made it difficult."*

*"Poverty affects my family as a whole."*

*"Poverty break up a home."*

*"You are the breadwinner but can't maintain your family."*

*"I am poor because I cannot provide for the needs for my family."*

*"A little finance in your hand to feed your family."*

*"I can't maintain my family."*

Most of the men not only said that poverty prevented them from providing for their children, but they were concerned about how being poor affected their children.

*"I never had a father. I want to be there for my children to ensure that they are healthy and attend school regularly."*

*"I am both mother and father."*

*"It hard for me to maintain my kids, it is a strain."*

*"There are things I would like to do for my children but I cannot."*

*"I am poor, my house destroyed by fire two years ago and I have five children lodging in somebody house."*

*"It affects provision for children at all levels."*

*"When they ask for things and I can't provide it I see the disappointment in their eyes and in their actions."*

Given the experiences of poor men, and the effect of poverty on their ability to play their roles as breadwinners and providers for their families as society expects, it is important that poor men be regarded as a vulnerable group and that poverty alleviation initiatives pay serious attention to the particular needs of poor men.

According to society's expectations about gender relationships, males are expected to provide for female partners and the latter are expected to depend on the former to meet many of their needs. However relationships between males and females are seriously affected by poverty.

*"When I lost my job as a teacher my girlfriend left me because I was unable to meet her needs to match that of her friends."*

*"Poverty deprive me of having a good wife."*

*"These days women bad, if you don't bring anything inside, you know is pressure you get."*

*"You know the law is for women, any time you touch them that's it."*

*"What some of us want is to have a woman to wash and iron."*

*"When you poor they do not stay."*

*"Some women will not come if you don't have a dollar or a piece of food."*

*"When I go home and I have no money to buy things my wife gets angry."*

*"I feel ashamed and embarrassed because my women deserted me."*

*"Another man took away my woman because I cannot provide for her."*

Poverty also affected self-esteem and made some men feel guilty, ashamed, depressed and frustrated, and a significant number said that they felt defenceless, helpless and powerless.

*"I know I am poor and this makes me feel sad."*

*"Poverty makes me feel real bad."*

*"Having come from a poor family, having nothing makes you feel you have no value, it lowers your self-esteem."*

*"Makes me feel small."*

*"I feel like an outcast."*

*"I feel unwanted."*

*"People take advantage of you."*

*"Fishermen and farmers are considered to be inferior and the lowest classes in society."*

*"I feel deprived of living comfortable."*

*"I feel embarrassed and inferior."*

*"Poverty makes you feel guilty, you want to do better but can't meet your needs."*

*"I have a family living in a little house, if I had money I would do something."*

*"We are unable to change our conditions, we are powerless."*

*"You powerless like you not even part of society when you poor."*

Some men also said that being poor made them feel to do things that they would not normally do and that this made them vulnerable and put them at risk.

*"Make me feel like I want to kill."*

*"I might end up killing myself you understand."*

*"Some just go by the shop and drink rum and drunk to release the stress."*

*"When you poor it going to lead to crime."*

*"People start to steal and do things to get money."*

*"If I not making money to help my family the legal way, I have to bend the rope a little and sell something that will give me money."*

*"Sell drugs and police come and hold you."*

*"Through poverty I myself reach in gaol, I become a prisoner."*

Poverty also had a negative effect on men's health and several men cited their inability to afford proper nutrition as well as medical care if they fell ill.

*"Poverty makes you sick, crazy and unsanitary."*

*"Can't afford medical expenses."*

*"If you are sick you don't have the money to see a doctor and if you have to have an operation you don't have the money."*

*"You feel at risk because if you sick you cannot go to the hospital because they will not attend to you."*

*"You cannot buy the medicine."*

*"You may stay a whole day without food and may not be able to eat the right type of food."*

*"Lack of proper nutrition."*

*"You cannot buy the right food to build up your body."*

*"It bring malnutrition."*

*"You accumulate stress, you get sugar, you get blood pressure."*

At the same time some it seemed that some men did not pay too much attention to their health.

*"We do not give it a priority."*

*"Once we able to work without pain, we see no reason to visit the doctor."*

*"If there is constant pain we will visit the hospital."*

These last few statements are evidence that some men do not pay attention to their health until their symptoms cannot be ignored any longer.

A few men felt that poverty had robbed them of their independence and freedom, made them miss opportunities, and prevented them from achieving their goals.

*"Since you not independent you poor, you cannot do what you want or go where you want to go."*

*"You miss out on opportunities."*

*"I can't improve my education or go to a higher institution of learning."*

*"Poverty is a total setback in life."*

*"Nothing ain't happening for me."*

*"It prevent you from achieving certain things in life."*

*"It so hard to get what I want."*

*"I can't bring out the person I want to be."*

*"Poverty deprive me of having a good life."*

### 6.7.1.2 Access to Resources

The men identified some of the resources that they need to be able to survive and to shoulder their responsibilities, but they also identified some of the difficulties they faced in accessing much-needed resources. Financial resources, access to jobs and to money were seen as essential.

*"We can't carry out our responsibilities, we don't have the money."*

*"Financial resources difficult to access."*

*"What preventing me is no employment."*

*"We do not get paid for the work we do."*

*"We are told that money is there so what is the holdup?"*

*"I need some money to get me moving."*

*"You must work to get money."*

Many men, especially those who lived in rural communities and were farmers not only regarded land as a very important asset, but also believed that access to and ownership of land was critical. However in the Carib Territory land is communal and while farmers there have access to the land, it cannot be used as collateral to obtain loans from the bank.

At the same time in Penville very few of the men who participated in the focus group discussion legally owned the land that they farmed, some said that they were farming on family land and some others said that they had experienced many difficulties in getting their land registered.

*"Lack of ownership to land is a major setback."*

*"No access to land."*

*"The land owned by the government."*

*"I do not have my own land, I can only make a little piece of garden sometimes."*

*"What I planting on now is family land."*

*"I don't like the situation where I can't get my land registered."*

*"I wasn't an easy thing for me to get that registered you know."*

*"We can't afford to pay a lawyer and a surveyor to own a piece of land."*

Some of the farmers also identified transport and markets for their produce as important resources, but many lamented the fact that lack of access to these resources was preventing them from making a decent profit from farming.

*"You need transport and markets."*

*"As a farmer I need transport. Transportation is a problem; sometimes I want to go to the market but I can't get there."*

*"I not making enough money because when I sell my food at the market I have to pay transport to carry load for me."*

*"Market to sell our produce."*

*"You produce but you cannot sell most of your produce; it just stay in the ground so you back to square one."*

*"When you distil the bay oil you cannot sell it on the market."*

*"I can't sell my things in Penville cause everybody up here have garden, Who I going to sell it to?"*

*"To create market is to ease up poverty."*

Those men who were fishermen identified boats and proper equipment as essential resources that they needed to be able to make fishing profitable.

*"Bigger boats with modern equipment."*

*"I don't have the right equipment for fishing."*

*"I don't have a boat to go when I want to fish or how I want, sometimes I get to go with somebody but how often?"*

*"My own boat."*

*"I have a boat but I don't have what it take to run it."*

### **6.7.1.3 Sense of Well Being and Quality of Life**

Among the things that contribute to a sense of well being is the ability to enjoy a good quality of life, to have a good job and enough money to have a decent home and to live comfortably, to have good health, and a happy heart, and good relations with family. In addition to these things some mentioned belief in God.

*"A good living, a wife to support the house."*

*"Good family relationships."*

*"Having everything you need to survive."*

*"A sense of well being is food on the table, good health and family well taken care of."*

*"Living well means being financially secure in order to eat well, enjoy good health, and dress to impress."*

*"It entails having a good relationship with God."*

Some men were satisfied with the quality of their lives.

*"I have faith because I am both spiritual and physical."*

*"I am 80% satisfied I am leaving 20% because I feel my life could be better."*

*"I am quite satisfied because the Almighty will take control of everything."*

However many of the men were not satisfied with their lives.

*"Well I had always wanted a big house and enough money to live comfortably but things didn't work out."*

*"I am not satisfied with the quality of my life, things are bad."*

*"I am not happy no job no work I cannot feed my children."*

*"I am not satisfied with my life, I do not have what I want."*

*"I do not feel happy at all, I just can't sleep, I feel like I blowing up."*

In addition to being able to meeting their needs and to being able to provide for their families, the men were of the view that the ability to realise their dreams and to achieve their aspirations and goals would contribute to their sense of well being. While several of the men said that they had dreamed of being able to meet their basic needs and to be able to provide for their families, several also dreamed of furthering themselves, of obtaining a better education, and of becoming a professional. Interestingly one man wanted to leave a legacy.

*"I don't want wish to have gold and silver, I don't want riches, all I want is a way of living that allow me to meet my needs and my kids' needs."*

*"It difficult to reach goals."*

*"I wanted a better education but my parents didn't have enough money to send me to school so I had to go to work to support my brothers and sisters and myself."*

*"I wanted to be somebody, a lawyer or a doctor but things didn't work out."*

*"I want my boy to go for what I never had. I want to see him burst the system."*

*"I want to leave a legacy, something to serve as a remembrance when I am gone."*

However many said that because of poverty, and especially because they lacked money they had been unable to achieve these goals.

*"I want to build a better life but right now the money too small."*

*"Lack of resources and lack of skills prevented us from achieving our goals."*

*"Sometimes when you raising children it takes a while to achieve."*

*"I made plenty children and all the money I make have to spend on them so there is none left to further myself."*

*"I would like to do some travelling, but I need money to do that."*

*"I went far and come back down."*

#### **6.7.1.4 Coping and Survival Strategies**

Many of the men said that they found it difficult to cope and that they had to use a variety of strategies to survive.

*"Coping is very difficult."*

*"It rough you know."*

*"I living by my mother still."*

*"I live one day at a time."*

*"I get handouts."*

*"Utilise whatever is available."*

Some stressed the importance of managing scarce resources, of prioritizing and budgeting, of being frugal, of doing odd jobs, and of working hard.

*"If you manage whatever resources you have, you on your way."*

*"The main thing is to remain stress free."*

*"Put priorities first."*

*"Budgeting."*

*"Don't waste what you have."*

*"Do odd jobs."*

*"I fry bakes and chicken to cope."*

*"Work hard."*

*"Set up a backyard garden."*

*"I eat what I plant."*

*"I buy less things because everything is money and money not flowing."*

*"Cut cost wherever possible."*

*"Only buy things I need."*

*"Pay bills in parts."*

The men also said that in order to survive they sometimes have to take risks, but that some risks could result in loss of a limb or of life, breakdown in family, and praedial larceny.

*"Borrowing money from the bank not being able to pay back and the bank could take what you have and you would lose it."*

*"The work environment, sometimes where you work is a risk, you work on a roof and you could fall, anything could happen to you."*

*"Take a \$200 from the little you have to buy fertiliser and at the end you don't make money."*

*"Hunting out of season."*

*"Extreme hunger."*

*"Accepting unwanted jobs."*

*"Sell dope I am a dope king."*

*"Fishing in rough sea."*

A few men believed that their faith in God had allowed them to cope and to survive even in hard times.

*"We have faith in God that's how we cope."*

### 6.7.1.5 Concerns and Needs

All of the men, especially those who said that they were poor were concerned about being able to meet their basic needs, to shoulder their responsibilities, to play their roles as breadwinners and to be able to provide for their families as they would like. They were concerned about the high level of unemployment and underemployment and said that these only prevented them from obtaining jobs and making enough money that they needed. They also referred to the low salaries and said that these were insufficient to meet the high cost of living, high taxes, and other financial commitments.

*"The unemployment situation."*

*"Cost of living too high."*

*"I cannot meet my basic needs on a daily basis, especially food."*

*"Taxes too high."*

But they said that unemployment was also creating other problems for young people, especially for males who in the absence of gainful employment, turned to gangs, drugs and other illegal activities. Many were concerned about the high level of drug abuse among the youth.

*"The youth is being sidetracked."*

*"Unemployment, the cocaine men; people are idle that's when they go into drugs."*

*"I look at the young boys not taking an interest in their schooling and what you will find is that there will be no men in the future, no man to really lead the way, to take their responsibilities as husbands or leaders of the community."*

In addition to the high level of unemployment the men in Roseau were concerned about home ownership and the men in Silver Lake were concerned about the poor conditions of the long houses which they said were in very bad condition. Some were even willing to do the repairs if the government would provide the materials.

*"A house, a home."*

*"If only the materials for repairing and improving the house were made available, the houses would be prepared."*

*"I am a carpenter and that would make me happy."*

Several of the men therefore saw self-development and empowerment of individuals as important if they were to be able to improve their situation and achieve their goals, and in their view education and guidance were essential to these processes.

*"Unless there is some way of teaching everyone to personally develop themselves we are going to find ourselves in a serious situation."*

*"Motivation."*

*"Everybody to think for themselves and say this is where I want to go and I will do what it takes to get there."*

*"If everybody get proper guidance and proper education we can change the perspective and our mentality."*

Some men were concerned about the amount of bureaucracy in government and financial institutions as well as about discrimination and exploitation.

*"Farmers are not treated right."*

*"Underpayment and exploitation."*

Others were concerned about the number of children who were suffering and the men in Roseau were particularly concerned about safety of their children and their neighbours.

*"I am concerned about the safety of my children."*

*"The safety of my neighbours and other persons in the community."*

At the same time concern was expressed about the lack of unity and cooperation among members in some of the communities, and some men believed that individual differences and religion were contributing to disunity and lack of cooperation among community members. They therefore stressed the importance of putting differences aside and of coming together to improve conditions in their communities.

*"Religion is increasing the division among community members."*

*"If we are divided we cannot be one, but if we unite we can go from there."*

*"We have problems but if we can put aside differences and work together we can achieve our goals."*

*"Maybe we have to form the community in a group to help one another."*

*"If people come together and make an effort we all can improve each other's lives."*

*"We can use what skills we have to help others."*

*"Men must organise themselves."*

#### **6.7.1.6 Needs**

The men identified the following needs.

- **Economic**

*"Opportunities for self employment."*

*"Secure permanent jobs."*

*"Right now we need money."*

*"Markets for agricultural produce."*

*"Access to credit and loans."*

*"Increase in salary."*

*"Government to see that private sector employers to take care of their employees."*

- **Resource**

*"Access to land."*

*"I am a farmer I need land to work."*

*"Security and title to land."*

*"Funding to support fishing."*

*"A good landing site."*

*"Reduction in gas prices."*

- **Educational, Guidance and Leadership**

*"Education is critical"*

*"A sound education."*

*"More finance for education"*

*"I think what we need most of all is proper guidance."*

*"We need persons within the community, well thinking persons, to come together and form some kind of organization to do something for the community."*

*"More programmes for men."*

However, most of these needs were not being met.

### **6.7.1.7 Suggestions for Alleviating Poverty**

The men made several suggestions for alleviating poverty and they were of the view that if their suggestions were taken seriously, living conditions would improve and those who were living in poverty would be better able to improve their situation.

- More employment, more jobs;
- Reduce the unemployment rate;
- Self employment;
- Better pay and better working conditions;
- Provide more and better market for bay oil and other agricultural produce;
- A partnership between government and the private sector to create employment;
- Increase salaries;
- Lower the cost of living;
- Bank or credit facility for Carib people;
- Access to land for housing and agriculture;
- Encourage more people to go back to the land;

- Repair village roads and drains;
- Access roads to farms;
- A canning factory;
- More productivity;
- Improve housing conditions;
- Ensure that more people have proper latrines;
- More recreational facilities;
- Look at the communities as a whole not just at individuals;
- Implement more programmes for personal and social development;
- Education for dropouts;
- More skills training programmes;
- More effective community organizations;
- More government support for the less fortunate;
- Family planning;
- Parliamentary Representatives to pay more attention to the needs of the people; and
- Effective representation at the level of Central Government.

### 6.7.2 WOMEN

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Two hundred and thirty women participated in focus group discussions. More than half were of childbearing age, between the ages of twenty and forty-five years of age. Fifty-four were between forty-six and fifty-five years of age and twenty-one were between fifty-six and sixty-five years old. Nine were over sixty-five years old. One hundred and twelve, or almost half, were single and eighty-four were married. Forty-two of them were single parents and eighty-three were grandparents.

Some seventy percent of the women had only a primary education, but fifty-four of them had a secondary education; nine had been to university and twenty-one had some level of technical vocational education. About two-thirds of them were employed and of these fifty-seven were farmers, forty-eight were vendors and one was a fisherwoman, all occupations that were low-skilled and low-paying and that had been possible to obtain with low levels of education. At the same time twelve were teachers and thirteen were civil servants, occupations that required post-secondary and/or tertiary education. Sixteen were self-employed as hairdressers, seamstresses, or shopkeepers.

### 6.7.2.1 Perception, Experience, Effect and Impact of Poverty

All of the women agreed that poverty was the inability to meet basic needs like food, shelter and clothes and to afford amenities like water and cable television.

*"When you can't meet your basic needs like food and shelter."*

*"When you wake up in the morning and don't know what you going to eat what you going to give the children to go to school."*

*"When you can hardly eat."*

*"Cannot provide nutritious meals for your family."*

*"When it rains I have to shift my bed, is that not poverty?"*

*"Not having a house of your own. I am living in my mother house and it frustrating."*

*"Struggling to survive but cannot make two ends meet."*

*"There is never enough."*

*"Poverty is when you can't make it."*

*"Poverty is having neither front nor back."*

Several said that poverty meant the inability to buy what they needed or to pay bills, and having to live below a certain standard in poor conditions.

*"Poverty is when you cannot buy."*

*"Expenditure more than income."*

*"Even if I have a roof over my head and I don't have a dollar to buy bread to send my child to school I poor."*

*"When you have to light bill to pay and can't pay it."*

*"When you living below the standard of living."*

*"Having to live in deplorable conditions."*

The women recognised that unemployment and lack of a job contribute to poverty and creates dependency.

*"Anytime you not working you fall under the poverty line."*

*"Unemployment is a sickness."*

*"Lack of employment can make you mad."*

*"No job no job opportunities."*

*"In order to make money we need jobs."*

*"When you totally dependent on other people or on the state to get necessities like food, clothing and shelter."*

*"Not independent financially."*

*"It have people there that pity me and when I don't have they will give me food but I have to give it to the children and drink water."*

*"You find yourself a beggar to your neighbours."*

*"I feeling bad always have to rely on people to help me out."*

However, even some women who were employed said that they were the working poor because the money that they worked for was insufficient to meet all of their needs and to cope with the high cost of living.

*"Well I am a working poor I get a salary but due to the high cost of living it is not adequate to meet all of my needs."*

*"When you consider the heavy bills to be paid at the end of the month the money you receive is not enough."*

*"I feel a bit frightened that the bank might reclaim my house 'cause I cannot pay the mortgage, but it is me alone and I am a woman."*

A few women saw education as a basic need and they said that lack of education and the inability to provide education for their children could lead to poverty. But some others did not agree with this and they provided evidence to show that not having an education did not always result in poverty.

*"If you dunce you can't read and write."*

*"You dunce, you not educated, that is a form of poverty."*

*"People can be illiterate and afford."*

*"Being not able to read and write doesn't mean that you are poor."*

*"My grandfather was one of the richest men in this community and he didn't know his name on paper. He owned land, he owned shop, he owned bakery and vehicles. Is how you use your skills."*

Some of the women recognised that there were different classes and types of poverty and in comparing themselves to others they identified relative poverty. At the same time some also saw poverty as a psychological state.

*"The life not good but there are others who are worse."*

*"I would not consider us poor like Ethiopia."*

*"Poverty is what you see in other countries when you turn on the TV."*

*"We are not like Africa we can still get something to eat."*

*"Poverty is a form of mentality, the way you think is the way you live."*

*"I think poverty is a mental situation, it acting on your mind."*

*"Poverty is a state of lack."*

*"Poverty is slavery."*

*"Psychologically you dead you haven't got a sense of life, you feel like you at the end of the road."*

*"It not that we poor we have been living in poverty so long that we don't even think about it."*

Several of the women found it difficult to decide whether they were poor and a few of the women said that they were not poor because they could meet some if not all of their needs. On the other hand some did not want to be considered poor, either because they were not destitute or because of the stigma attached to the label.

*"We do not consider ourselves to be poor."*

*"I am not poor I can provide for myself."*

*"I wouldn't say that I poor nuh, because I have food to eat even if it not every day, I have water to bathe, and I living in a little house there with my family so I cannot say I poor."*

*"I not poor. I eating and drinking."*

*"I am not poor because I can eat fig."*

*"Well I am not really poor, but so many things you want to have and you cannot have them."*

*"Not poor because I am blessed with a roof over my head, food, and clothing."*

*"I am not poor like hungry you know, but because of the cost of living you have very little money to survive so sometimes it really means that you poor."*

*"Even if I can't provide three meals a day, I do not consider myself poor, no way!"*

*"Even if we poor we do not want to show we poor."*

However, many said that they were poor, that they were unable to meet their basic needs and to provide for their children because they were not employed.

*"Right now I don't have supper tonight."*

*"I am pregnant and I cannot work to feed my children"*

*"I consider myself poor I do not have mother or father."*

*"All of us in here poor sir, it have some that can manage but all of us poor."*

*"I living but I cannot meet my needs so I know I poor."*

*"I have nine children, I never work and I don't even know how they come big. "*

Women in many of the communities said that in addition to unemployment, poor living conditions and lack of amenities had contributed to their poverty and that they had to live in such conditions because they were poor. They mentioned inadequate housing including inability to own a house, and having to live in small houses in need of repair, with little space and no privacy,

*"I have no place to rest my head that's why I am poor."*

*"Those houses is one room, when I want to make love with my boyfriend we don't have no privacy."*

*"When you in the house you see heaven."*

*"My house small and it like a strainer when the rain fall it leaks."*

*"When rain falling at night I have to hurry to take my children out."*

Several were particularly concerned about the absence of toilet facilities and the implications for their health and that of others in their communities.

*"I have a toilet to install but no money to do it."*

*"No water, no toilet, house not in proper condition."*

*"I don't have anywhere to dispose my waste."*

The women provided information and shared experiences that showed the various ways in which poverty had affected them. It had affected their self-esteem and made them have a poor self-concept, and feel inferior; it had robbed them of dignity and of a sense of self-worth, and it had made them feel unwanted and ignored when others looked down on them.

*"Poverty hurts."*

*"It affecting us bad."*

*"I feel unwanted."*

*"You alone in the world."*

*"Nobody wants to see you."*

*"I feel left out."*

*"You are a non-person."*

*"It makes you feel lower than other people."*

*"People look down on you because of your level."*

*"My neighbour feel she above me and when she pass she look at me as if she teasing me."*

*"Just because they know you they don't have look down on you."*

*"It lowers your self-esteem because you feel others are better than you."*

*"Poor people are low-rated."*

*"It not a good feeling at all."*

Many women therefore feel helpless and powerless.

*"It brings stress and unhappiness."*

*"Poverty makes you feel useless."*

*"I feel uncomfortable but I can't do anything about it."*

*"When you poor you cannot feel comfortable at all."*

The women also talked about being stereotyped, about the stigma of living in poor communities and about being discriminated against and excluded because they were poor.

*"I think people looking down on us because we come from Penville."*

*"We are discriminated against by other communities because of our location."*

*"If you come from a particular village you do not qualify for a scholarship."*

*"We don't always get information about opportunities for training, I feel the information only passing to one set."*

*"They have some information but because we poor we just not getting it."*

*"You know there is also age discrimination when facing the financial institution; according to your age the interest is higher."*

*"They put down my child from the bus but I can't go to the police, I don't have force, I cannot go to higher authority, I don't have security, I am disadvantaged."*

*"We don't know who to go to."*

*"Discrimination especially when you go for a job."*

*"I work for the company for eleven years and when I got blood clots and high blood pressure I lost the job and they never compensated me."*

*"You become anti-social."*

*"You don't socialise."*

*"Not even PTA meeting we does go to. I myself not going because I don't have a proper dress to put on me to go and I myself can't keep up."*

*"You don't have a choice – the piece of hand-me-down tight so you don't bother to go."*

*"We don't have the feeling to be with people, they don't want you there, so you just stay at home."*

*"We cannot go nowhere."*

A number of the women agreed that being poor made them feel vulnerable and put them at risk. Some said that in order to survive they sometimes had to do things that they did not want to do including becoming involved in risky sexual behaviours or in illegal activities.

*"Poor persons are more vulnerable to sickness and disease."*

*"You are vulnerable to sexual, physical and verbal abuse."*

*"Women who cannot meet their needs find themselves in situations they should not be in."*

*"Involvement in drugs."*

*"Women become thieves or victims of thieves."*

*"Poverty contributes to prostitution and drug trafficking."*

*"They get involved in drugs, sex and prostitution."*

*"It can lead to prostitution – selling your body even if you don't want to."*

*"We know we does it but we don't look at it as prostitution, because to us it is a kind of job."*

*"Prostitution exposes you to AIDS."*

*"Twenty dollars for sex, you know."*

*"I know I poor and if I need something I just go by the bar and make a deal."*

*"You are a single mother, you have children, you don't have a job so you do some drugs to make a living and then the police arrest you and back to square one but you had to do it; the children come first."*

Some women said that living in the ghetto among drug addicts not only made them vulnerable but also put their health at risk because of the effects of secondhand smoke.

*"People look down on we in the ghetto."*

*"Secondhand smoke killing us."*

*"Everywhere you pass and go is smoke."*

A few also identified the risk of being out late at night or early morning.

*"You might leave a place at ten o'clock at night but there are very few street lights and you are at risk of being abducted."*

*"Some of us work at the hotels and leave work at one o'clock in the morning to walk home. The hotel don't provide transportation."*

*"Having to open the building at five in the morning is hazardous, anything could happen."*

*"The chance of being raped, getting killed or getting pregnant and not knowing the father."*

Women also said that poverty affected their relationships with men that often result in unwanted pregnancies.

*"Poverty can cause you to have different relationships."*

*"When you don't have nothing and you go and beg man."*

*"Defenceless because you have to depend on a man for money."*

*"Having children at an early age."*

*"Women get pregnant with more children when they go to seek help to feed those they already have."*

*"Poverty bring children, you make one with John and John walk away, and you go with Paul and he get you pregnant and so it going.",*

*"If it were not for poverty women would not be exposed to early pregnancy."*

Poverty also affects women's relationships with their children.

*"I does see some parents passing the rage on their children when they don't have money."*

*"Sometimes you pass your frustration on the children."*

*"It causing us to abuse our children. They not doing nothing but because you don't have nothing to give them to eat, you does rough them up."*

*"You segregate your children."*

*"When they don't have to give the children they abuse them."*

*"Some parents show little concern for children who become pregnant."*

*"Children go astray because parents cannot provide for them."*

At the same time information provided by women shows that poverty can also have a negative effect on the relationships between men and women. Women said that poverty can cause them to be exploited by men because men liked to dominate, control women.

*"You are going to be used by the big fellas."*

*"Men take advantage of women who are poor."*

*"Sometimes when you come for a job they think you looking for man."*

*"Partners might prevent us from doing what we want to do while they spend what they earn on someone else or something else."*

*"They never want you to go no place when you want to go to a little meeting the first thing they say is no you not going."*

*"If you go your eyes might open and you might see what he is doing you is true."*

The women were very much aware of gender inequality and the way in which this affected gender relations, and some shared their experiences that showed how men tried to control and put restrictions on them. .

*"Sometimes you wonder what I marry mister for; anytime he home is a headache, he want everything but I tired so I ask him what to do for supper and he say 'me you asking? Do what you want, whatever you do we will eat.' He doesn't help nuh, but when you tired and go on the bunk ...well let's not go there."*

*"Sometimes the only time you see your partner is at night. He just come to sleep to harass you more."*

*"They never want you to go no place when you want to go to a little meeting the first thing they say is no you not going."*

*"If you go your eyes might open and you might see what he is doing you is true."*

*"They always there to put restrictions on you."*

*"Women must take a bold step and empower themselves."*

Some of the women pointed out that women often become victims of abuse and violence, and women in one community were exploring ways to deal with these phenomena.

*"Women are beaten up but they can do very little about it because they are helpless."*

*"If your partner is the breadwinner they tend to take advantage; they tend to be controlling and that's where the abuse comes in."*

*"A number of women are being abused."*

*"We are looking for ways to assist abused women."*

Poverty also has a negative effect on women's health as well as on that of their children. According to them this is because of their inability to eat nutritious meals and their lack of money to pay for quality health care and to purchase medication when they need it.

*"Poor persons are more vulnerable to sickness and disease."*

*"It stress your mind and soul."*

*"Sick and stress out."*

*"The threat of disease because of the use of our bodies."*

*"When you are worrying you can become sick with high blood pressure and diabetes."*

*"It affect your mental health, your physical health and your social health."*

*"When you go to the hospital you must pay for your medication and they so expensive already."*

*"The high cost of medication."*

*"Being a diabetic and having a child who is diabetic is hard on me."*

*"You have to buy a hundred strips to take tests but they cost \$95, it not easy."*

*"Sometimes you need to stay without food and you need food to take care of yourself."*

*"Lack of money means no access to pap smear or mammograms or other tests that means more exposure to risk."*

The majority of poor women cannot afford to go to a private doctor or to buy medicine from a private pharmacy so they depend on the public health services, the hospital or health clinic for health care and medication. However some were dissatisfied with the quality of the services that they received. One woman shared an experience that highlighted the poor attitudes of some of those who work in health care institutions as well as the poor quality of the service received at the hospital.

*"If you have no money you cannot get proper health care."*

*"I cannot pay doctor and buy medicine it so expensive."*

*"The doctor give you a prescription but all you can get is Paracetamol – you have to go to the pharmacy and buy the rest."*

*"Even in an emergency you waste time at the causality department and everything is by an appointment."*

*"People are turned away from the hospital for not having money to pay for the tests."*

*"The hospital like a hotel they charging you by the day."*

*"I went to the hospital with my diabetic child. His sugar was very low and the nurse told me to buy him a drink to bring it up. I only had a hundred dollar bill so I went to the accounts department and asked the clerk to change it. She did not respond and even when I explained about the child's situation she did not assist and when I told her that she was not a human being she told me that "everybody must die!"*

A few women also shared similar experiences that highlighted the poor attitudes and disrespect shown by some employees in other government institutions.

*"When you go to the offices for service, the employees are disrespectful they completely ignore you and carry on their telephone conversations."*

*"We afraid because we cannot speak English correctly, they will laugh at us."*

*"Because of our poverty we don't know how to get information."*

*"When you hear about something it too late, they close."*

#### **6.7.2.2 Roles and Responsibilities**

All of the women said that their main responsibility was taking care of their children and their homes. As a result they not only performed these gender roles as expected by the society, but gave them priority and they made sacrifices to ensure that their children are cared for.

*"Taking care of the house and kids."*

*"Taking care of our children is our priority."*

*"As women is your gut feeling to take care of your children."*

*"All the energy is on the children."*

*"We want the best for our children."*

*"Try to be good role models for the children."*

*"Some women stay hungry to make sure their children eat."*

However, because of poverty many of the women were unable to care for their children as they would like and they were neither able to provide them with the basic needs nor to meet their educational needs. The latter was of grave concern because although most of the women only had a primary education, they all believed in the importance of education and felt that educating their children would ensure that they would be able to move out of poverty and improve their living conditions.

*"Education is the most important thing."*

*"I don't want my children to come out like me."*

*"Children need education in order to better themselves and do better than their mothers."*

*"Education important I don't want to see my children turn out like me."*

*"I have to send them to school. I didn't finish school I have three children, I don't want my daughter to get pregnant at fourteen years like me."*

But many found it difficult to provide their children with what they needed in school.

*"I have three children going to high school so my responsibility is to go and look for books for them. I does make it a point to go to the Trust Fund to look for help."*

*"When school close, I have to look for help to get the books."*

*"Taking care of the children and sending them to school."*

*"Especially when I have to look for bus fare to send the children to school."*

*"Poverty affects my children because they can't get a good education. I doh have a computer and in order for my child to get good grades they work must be typed, but I don't have money for them to go in café. That is rich people can do that."*

Gender socialization has resulted in the belief and acceptance that women, whether they are single or in partnership with a man, should have the major responsibility for child care and management of the home. However, women who participated in the focus group discussions complained about the heavy burden that this puts on them and cited many instances in which men were reluctant and unwilling to share in child care or to "help" with household chores.

*"Being the breadwinners, the providers."*

*"I am a single parent."*

*"I am mother and father."*

*"Some of the fathers, even husbands, leave too much responsibilities on women; they leave us to do everything and complain they tired because they working hard."*

*"When you don't have the men to assist you it hard."*

*"Women are always left with the children, when a man goes he usually goes alone."*

*"We have to father the children."*

*"Everything is you. Sports day, even cricket, mother have to make the team, Teacher calling – is mother that coming."*

*"Things would be better if more of them help in the home."*

Some women also referred to the responsibility of older women, especially of poor and sometimes ill grandmothers left to care for grandchildren whose parents have migrated.

*"We leave them there and we migrate but who remain poverty on their doorstep."*

*"Not sending anything so grandmother with pressure, diabetes, rheumatism and poor little grandchildren."*

In addition to undertaking responsibility for child care and management of the home, some women believed that they had a responsibility to help make their communities a better place. Moreover, some of the activities that they undertook can be seen as an extension of their primary roles as caregivers and nurturers. Some cared for other women's children, some helped to care for the elderly, Some acted as examples and role models, some shared what little they had with those who were in need, and others volunteered to work in community groups.

*"My responsibility in the community is to look out for the community."*

*"Women tend to care for each others' children when they not there."*

*"To be good role models to younger women."*

*"I counsel the boys in school about the dangers of drugs."*

*"To be your brother's keeper."*

*"Shape younger minds."*

*"I share with those who cannot afford."*

Several women were also involved in the church and worked in church organizations, and according to one woman this provided her with recognition and emotional support that she did not get at home.

*"At home I wouldn't get a hug, but in church when is peace time someone will shake my hand. I will get a little something."*

On the other hand this was not everyone's experience; and because of this a few women were reluctant to do anything in the community because they felt that their efforts were not appreciated.

*"The community doesn't give you taste because people don't appreciate your efforts."*

### **6.7.2.3 Access to Resources**

Most poor women have little if any access to the resources that they need to be able to meet their basic needs and those of their families and to be able to perform their multiple roles of parent, caregiver, nurturer, breadwinner, home manager, and volunteer community worker.

All of the women said that in order to survive and perform their roles effectively they needed to have access to financial and material resources, including jobs and money, proper housing, and facilities in their communities. Several women in rural communities said that they needed access to land to be able to farm, and others said that access to education and skills was also important. However, except for land, most of these resources were not available in their communities and were not easy to access.

At the same time while some resources are available from prominent individuals and from various institutions and agencies, the women said that access to these was often difficult.

*"They not available to us."*

*"You go to Welfare for help and they not helping."*

*"They making it hard for us."*

*"We not getting help from government and other institutions."*

*"We can't access some of the programmes like DREP because we can't come up with the security."*

#### **6.7.2.4 Sense of Well Being and Quality of Life**

According to the women, a sense of well being and a good quality of life meant being able to live well. This depended on their ability to provide for themselves and their families, to be able to live in a comfortable house with all of the amenities, to be employed and to be independent. Several women also believed that a close relationship with God, love of self and others and peace of mind were essential in order to enjoy a sense of well being.

*"Living well is taking care of yourself spiritually, mentally and physically."*

*"Financial independence."*

*"When you able to push your hand in your pocket."*

*"Whether they are working or not all women should make themselves independent."*

*"Living well is accepting Christ as my Lord and Saviour."*

*"A close relationship with God."*

In addition, some said being able to achieve goals would contribute to their sense of well being. Among the goals they identified were a higher and better standard of living, jobs, scholarships for their children to further their education and opportunities to further their own education, and being able to spend quality time with their families.

In addition to unemployment, lack of financial resources and poverty, some of the women believed that having a lot of children had also prevented them from achieving their goals.

*"We making children like guinea pigs."*

*"I always pregnant so I cannot work; and that preventing me from reaching my goals."*

*"My children keeping me back a lot."*

While the majority of women were not satisfied with how they were living or with the quality of their lives, many had come to accept that they were unable to do better.

*"When you have children to go to college and no money to send them you cannot be satisfied."*

*"I am not satisfied with the love I am getting, I need love."*

*"I am not satisfied but I making do with what I have."*

*"You just have to accept and hope that one day it will be better."*

### 6.7.2.5 Coping and Survival Strategies

Women used a number of strategies to survive and to cope with situations in which they found themselves. They worked hard, they made sacrifices, they prioritised, budgeted, and economised, and they focussed on needs rather than wants.

*"Work hard."*

*"We are hardworking people."*

*"You have to cope, you just have to cope, beat the system and cope."*

*"Take one day at a time."*

*"You economise, you pinch everything."*

*"Make everything stretch."*

*"There is a thing called sacrifice."*

*"Well for me is budget, it could be a little fifty dollars but it budget already."*

*"Before I used to cook whole drumstick but now I cut it in two and three pieces so everybody can get some."*

*"Look for your needs and forget your wants."*

*"Put needs first and forget, leave your wants."*

A few planted and ate what they grew and some others worked two or more jobs and did a variety of odd jobs.

*"Grow your own crops, plant what you eat and eat what you grow."*

*"I do a little backyard gardening to help."*

*"Washing clothes, now and then, selling ice pop, braiding hair."*

*"Have to work odd hours, very early in the morning and late at night."*

Many women made do with what they had but a few said that they depended on others including on relatives overseas.

*"We are coping with the little we have."*

*"Well I have to get help from people. I have good neighbours and they helping us."*

*"Well some of us have relatives overseas and they helping us with some food and a little money from time to time, especially at Christmas."*

Some of the women admitted that they engaged in illegal activities but some others said that they relied on the goodness of God.

*"Having sex with men outside."*

*"Stealing, gambling and selling drugs."*

*"Well by the grace of God."*

*"We are praying to God. He is the only one who can help us."*

*"Ask God to give strength."*

#### **6.7.2.6 Concerns and Needs**

Women in several of the communities were concerned about the impact of poverty on poor conditions in which they were living, inadequate housing without basic amenities including no toilet facilities. Most of the women were concerned about lack of employment opportunities for women, about insufficient money, and about the high cost of living, especially of food and of utility bills. Some were also concerned about the duties charged by Customs on barrels that they from overseas.

*"Lack of jobs, unemployment too high."*

*"My little salary."*

*"Especially the light bill."*

*"Sometimes you don't know where the money coming from."*

*"Customs killing us. When our children send a box or something for us we shouldn't have to pay all that amount at the customs."*

Many women were concerned about the impact of poverty on children and the possibility that their children might continue the cycle of poverty. Some were also concerned about poor parenting skills and about fact the fathers were not playing a meaningful role in their children's lives; all of them were concerned about their children's education and their inability to keep their children in school and to allow them to pursue higher education.

Some women were also concerned about the plight of young males and females.

*"I am concerned about the future of young women growing up in the community. They are vulnerable. Some are dropouts because their parents can't afford to send them to school. What will their future bring?"*

*"The state of our young boys."*

*"How to get guys off the street."*

Some, especially women in one of the communities where incest was rampant, were concerned about child abuse.

*"Children are sexually active at an early age."*

*"Our children are being sexually abused."*

*"Incest relationships."*

*"What about the future of these young children who are being abused and molested?"*

Concerned about the number of social problems especially about drugs and violence.

*"Drugs and drug use."*

*"The use and abuse of drugs by young people."*

*"I saw some 15-18 year old boys going to the State college with cutlasses to beat up some students."*

The data therefore show that women were not only concerned about matters that concerned them and their families but also about about things that were affecting other individuals and groups in their communities and the communities as a whole.

#### **6.7.2.7 Needs**

The needs identified by the women can be grouped under the following headings.

- ***Physical and Material***
  - Better living conditions;
  - Proper houses;
  - Proper toilets;
  - Improved recreational facilities; and
  - Improved health facilities.
- ***Economic***
  - Money;
  - Employment;
  - More job opportunities;
  - More and better paying jobs;
  - Higher salaries;
  - Price control;
  - Lower cost of living;
  - Lower utility bills;
  - Subsidized inputs for agriculture;
  - Summer jobs for high school students;
  - Land;
  - Better markets for agricultural produce;
  - Access to credit; and
  - Lower customs duties on barrels received from relatives overseas.

- **Educational**
  - Education for their children;
  - Education programmes to empower women;
  - High school in the Carib Territory;
  - Literacy programmes for adults;
  - Classes in budgeting and money management;
  - Classes in how to manage resources;
  - Computer centre/Internet café in the Carib Territory;
  - Technical and skills training programmes;
  - Counselling;
  - Parent education; and
  - Family planning education.
- **Social**
  - Instill good values in children;
  - Free family planning;
  - Protection and care for the elderly and for people with disabilities;
  - More assistance for the less fortunate and destitute;
  - To form community groups; and
  - Community projects

#### **6.7.2.8 Suggestions for Improving Living Conditions and Reducing Poverty**

All of the women had ideas of what should be done to improve their living conditions and reduce poverty. Among these were:

- Provide employment for women and for youth;
- Lower the cost of living;
- Lower cost of light bills;
- Increase salaries;
- Fix access roads to agricultural lands;
- More markets for agricultural produce;
- Build a canning factory so that fruits do not go to waste;

- Fish processing and packaging facilities;
- Implement income generating projects;
- Improve roads and drainage;
- Assist children who want to pursue higher education;
- Provide training in a number of skills;
- Drug Education Unit and Ministry of Health should do some serious sessions with young people, especially with young boys;
- Put Committees in place to oversee development projects in the communities;
- Community action;
- Improve health facilities and the quality of health care; and
- Rehabilitation Centres.

### 6.7.3 YOUTH

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One hundred and sixty-seven young people participated in focus group discussions. Sixty-five of these were male and one hundred and two were female. The majority was between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, and forty-three were between the ages of twenty and thirty-five. Some of them were students, and sixty-four – twenty-eight males and thirty-six females – were either in secondary school or had a secondary education. A small number of the older ones had some level of technical and vocational education, but several were unemployed. Among those employed there was a teacher, a public servant, a farmer a fisherman and a construction worker. Three of the young women were single parents.

#### 6.7.3.1 Perception, Experience, Effect and Impact of Poverty

The young people saw poverty as being unable to meet basic needs, to help yourself and to afford what you want, and having nothing.

*"Lack of basic needs for daily life."*

*"You have no food, no shelter, no clothing."*

*"When you cannot buy bread and parents cannot provide your basic needs."*

*"Being hungry and can't afford food to eat."*

*"Homelessness."*

*"Not having anything."*

*"When you cannot afford."*

*"Can't help yourself."*

Some said that poverty meant having to live below the accepted standard.

*"Living below the country's economic standard."*

*"Not being able to live the average standard of living."*

Others said that lack of or sufficient financial resources contributed to poverty.

*"The financial state."*

*"When you don't have money."*

*"When most of your needs cannot be met because you have no money and it is a strain on you."*

*"Low income."*

*"Inadequate shelter, housing bad."*

A few said that lack of other things besides basic needs can also cause poverty.

*"Sometimes you have all the food to eat but what you really need you don't have."*

The majority of young people said that they were not poor because their needs were being met.

*"Is like we can dress, eat and have a place to shelter."*

*"I have all of my basic needs, food, clothing and shelter."*

*"We eating and drinking."*

*"I have clothing and am not dying of hunger."*

*"Though we may not have three meals a day at times, we do not consider ourselves to be poor."*

*"If we don't have breakfast we will have supper."*

*"I have the main things."*

*"Things I need I have."*

*"Things just hard but we not poor."*

At the same time while some said that they were not poor when they compared themselves to the poverty that they saw on TV, they were aware of and knew other young people who were poor.

*"When I think of Ethiopia, I don't see me in that category, I not poor."*

*"I don't see myself poor, like when I watch the feed the children programme with people who don't have anything to eat."*

*"Some don't come to school because of lack of money and some come to school hungry."*

Some of the young people did say that they were poor.

*"Don't have enough food to eat and don't have enough money."*

*"I does be hungry. Don't have enough food."*

*"I have a roof over my head and clothes to wear but sometimes no food so I am poor."*

*"Sometimes you have all the food to eat but you still don't have what you want."*

*"I kinda poor because certain things I wish I had I don't have, like a computer."*

*"I don't have anything. My parents work but I don't have anything to my name."*

*"Not even having a dollar sometimes and not being able to get it from my parents."*

*"Certain things my parents will say not to take, because they trying to save."*

Among those who said that they were poor were those who were poor but still able to afford some of the things they needed.

*"We not poor, poor, we can afford a little thing, but the bank, we cannot face that."*

The young people who said that they were poor shared experiences that provided insights into the many ways in which poverty affected them. On the one hand it evoked many negative emotions. Some felt angry, depressed, unlucky, degraded, and uncivilised and some said that it affected their self-esteem.

*"When I cannot have the things I want it affects me real bad."*

*"It make me feel vex."*

*"You feel frustrated and depressed."*

*"Poverty makes me feel uncomfortable."*

*"It feels degrading."*

*"Self esteem is low."*

*"Lack of confidence."*

*"We feel rejected, like an outcast."*

*"Worthless, unwanted and sad."*

*"A sense of not belonging."*

*"Makes you feel like you not somebody."*

*"We feel bad; we tired of begging for clothes and school fees."*

*"It embarrassing."*

*"We feel powerless and inadequate."*

Some others said that poverty made them feel unloved, used and abused, jealous and envious, discouraged, and even suicidal. At the same time several said that poverty but only affected them but it also affected their families and their family life.

*"My mother always crying, she doh have, she doh have, she doh have."*

*"Your parents do not have it to give you."*

*"We have to go without because priority is given to the younger ones. They tell us our turn pass."*

*"My needs are left behind because there are things that are more important than mine."*

*"Family members get agitated and irritated with each other."*

*"Cause breakdown in families."*

The young people were also very much aware that poverty could affect their relationships with the opposite sex, and several said that because of poverty they were subjected to peer pressure because they could not compare or keep up with their peers.

*"Some girls want to know you have good clothes, they want to know you blinging and ting."*

*"Because you poor they don't want you."*

*"I cannot afford a boyfriend boys don't love poor girls."*

*"Some young men would approach you to have a relationship because they can offer you a shoes, money and hook you up."*

*"Seeing that young fellas your age have things you wish you have too."*

*"It like you not in style."*

*"When other people have shoes that in style, you have a shoe that sole not even well stick you have to be dragging your foot."*

*"Sometimes we going to school without breakfast and we doh have break and other children say we greedy just because we ask somebody for some."*

Since they sometimes did not have enough food or enough money to pay for health care, their health was also being affected.

*"Because of poverty there is a lot of poor hygiene, causing diseases."*

*"Staying hungry give us stomach pains and headaches."*

*"Parents cannot provide nutritious meals so development is retarded."*

*"Not enough money to pay for health care or for medication."*

*"Life is stressful, stress, stress and more stress."*

*"You can be affected mentally. Poverty creates pressure and stress and you can lose it and the fuse in your mind does go."*

*"It can cause you to go crazy."*

*"The mental part of it ...is a state of mind."*

In addition because many parents could not meet their children's educational needs the young people believed that poverty was exposing them to discrimination in school and preventing them from obtaining a good education.

*"Parents do not have enough money to buy books."*

*"One book to do all the subjects."*

*"Parents can't meet the expenses of CXC subjects."*

*"My parents could not afford to send me to college."*

*"Many young persons in the community go to school on a hungry stomach and there are some who can't go to school because of lack of finance."*

*"You cannot pay bus fare, cannot buy break at school, lack of education."*

*"If you doing a project, you do not have a computer and yours handwritten, you don't get correct."*

*"I don't have a computer at home. I had a project I did not type; I get less marks."*

*"I feel bad because I had to write my projects, the other children type, the teacher took mine and tear it and told me to type it."*

*"If I had a computer it would be easier."*

On the other hand, because there was a stigma attached to poverty, young people were stigmatised, ridiculed, exploited, and excluded from some activities.

*"When people know that we come from a poor community like Dubic they hurl remarks at us."*

*"It very hard to say that you come from that community."*

*"When you live in a poor community it difficult to get jobs."*

*"I write and submit twenty-one job applications all over the place but they say Fly City thieves."*

*"When you come from our area people will take advantage of you."*

*"People in better positions look down on you, especially when they bring hand-me-down clothes and place them by the road and everyone passing and look at them sorting out the clothes."*

*"Seeing I poor they will exploit me"*

*"Some cannot blend with others."*

Some of the young people also shared experiences of being ridiculed and discriminated against at school because they were poor or lived in a poor community.

*"We was in Maths class and I told the teacher I don't understand, but she say every time she have to explain to us and she not explaining again because when she get a sore throat none of us doesn't buy a malt for her."*

*"She takes care of one set of children and not the others."*

*"The teachers make us feel less fortunate."*

*"The teacher make me feel like I don't have no use."*

*"All the children laughing at us."*

*"The youth suffers."*

Many of the young people said that they were vulnerable and that poverty sometimes made them do things that put them at risk. Some become involved in drugs and drug trafficking, in risky sexual behaviours, in gang violence, and in crime. There was also a high rate of alcohol consumption by young males and females in some communities.

*"It cause you to do things you not supposed to do."*

*"Poverty makes you want to steal and engage in violence."*

*"Stealing and selling drugs is a risk."*

*"Sell drugs to survive."*

*"Drugs, get in trouble with the law."*

*"Youth do drugs or sell drugs can get arrested and go to gaol."*

*"Some may see drugs as a hazard but some might see it as a money thing."*

*"Sometimes we have to do what we have to do to when we need money."*

*"Buggery and get STDs"*

*"Human trafficking. You might be abused by whoever they sell you to."*

*"You hungry you poor you will find yourself in somebody house and do crime."*

*"We drink alcohol."*

*"We are at risk of violence."*

Some of the females felt that they were more vulnerable and at risk than the males.

*"We go to men for a little dollar to buy recess or to go to school or to buy soap to wash our clothes."*

*"You may have to turn to prostitution, theft and other things."*

*"I make my hard bom (prostitution)."*

*"Some young girls sell their bodies for material things."*

*"You feel yourself having sex and unwanted pregnancies and even STDs."*

*"You can get pregnant or get AIDS or other STDs."*

*"Rape because you poor"*

The data show that poverty contributed to youth involvement in many of these activities, and that while several young people used them as survival strategies, there was a belief that many young people were being pressured by their peers to become involved in some of these illegal activities.

*"Youth get involved because of peer pressure."*

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

Young people felt that if they could have all of their needs met and have good relationships in the family they would have a good quality of life. Good health and peace of mind and happiness, would contribute to a sense of well being, but some felt that if they were able to do as they liked without having to ask permission of parents, they would have a better sense of well being.

*"Having everything you want."*

*"Having a house, a car and a million dollars in the bank."*

*"Living in luxury."*

*"Healthy."*

*"I enjoy a high sense of well being because I'm happy."*

*"To be independent."*

*"To succeed in everything I do."*

*"Living my life as I want it to be."*

Education, performing well in school and opportunities to continue and further their education were also seen as important in order to have a good quality of life and to live well.

*"Knowing that I have a good education."*

*"If you don't have education you limited."*

*"A good education so as to get a good job."*

A few referred to the need for a reduction in the gap between those who were poor and those who were rich.

*"Having a sense of well being means we no longer have to live in those long houses with one room to do everything."*

*"We don't have to be looked down on when we have one book for every subject."*

The youth said that being able to meet their goals would contribute to a sense of well being. They had several aspirations and goals including higher education, and good, well paid professional jobs. Among other things they aspired to being nurses, neurosurgeons, bio-technologists, mechanical and chemical engineers, lawyers, accountants, architects, bio-chemists, orthopaedists, clinical psychologists, and electricians. However they also identified a number of things that prevented them from achieving their goals. Among these were poverty and inherited poverty, lack of opportunities and of financial resources, early pregnancy, and inability to further their education. A few also blamed the system.

*"No money for me to finish high school."*

*"I am not making enough and I want to further my education."*

*"Early pregnancy has prevented me from achieving my goal of finishing high school and going to college."*

*"The system designed to keep us poor and not fulfill our goals."*

Many of the young people said that they did not have a sense of well being and that they were not satisfied with the quality of their lives, but several believed that because they were poor they had no other choice but to accept life as it was.

*"I am not satisfied, lack of opportunities."*

*"We not satisfied but what can we do?"*

*"We meet it so we will live it so."*

*"I am not satisfied because I want to further my education."*

### **6.7.3.3 Access to and Control of Resources**

The young people identified a number of resources that they needed in order to survive and to enjoy the type of life that they would like, but many were of the view that resources were either not available or were limited. Even when some resources were available they said that because they were dependent on parents and on other adults, they had little or no control over some of them.

Among the resources that the youth felt were essential for their survival were not only the basic needs like nutritious food, clothing and proper shelter, but also love, affection and encouragement and acceptance from family, friends, teachers and the community as a whole. Several also stressed the importance of financial resources but realised that it was not easy to get money/enough money. While most of them said that education was an important resource because it was critical if they were to achieve their goals, and while they admitted that it was widely available and accessible, several had shared experiences that drew attention to the fact that they were not always able to access or benefit from the education that was available. Opportunities to pursue further and higher education was seen as being especially difficult to access mainly because of lack of financial resources.

Some of the younger participants said that they had no access to decision-making or control over decisions that affected their lives because parents made all of the decisions. A few said that recreational facilities, role models and guidance were also resources that are important.

Some of the youth acknowledged that while they did have access to some resources and that while they did receive some assistance these were not enough to take them out of poverty.

#### 6.7.3.4 Challenges Concerns and Needs

While several of the young people were concerned about their basic needs being met they were also concerned about their future. Because they saw education as critical to be able to improve their situation, they repeatedly identified acquisition of a good education as a major challenge. According to them this was so because of lack of financial resources they often did not have the necessary school materials, including access to computers; could not pay CXC examination fees; and would be unable to pursue higher education.

Other concerns included the many problems in their communities including the poor conditions in which they had to live, peer pressure, the number of young people involved in the use of drugs and in risky sexual activities, lack of recreational facilities, and unemployment among the youth. One young woman was of the view that just being a teenager was a challenge especially staying celibate.

They youth identified several things that they needed in order to survive and move out of poverty.

- A good education;
- Opportunities to pursue higher education;
- Cheaper text books;
- Skills training;
- Training camps;
- Money;
- Job opportunities;
- Better housing;
- Recreational facilities;
- Better health care facilities;
- Counselling;
- Love and affection;
- Acceptance and respect;
- Opportunities for youth to express themselves;
- A youth council to be a voice for the youth;
- Role models; and
- Parents to spend more time with their children.

### 6.7.3.5 Suggestions for Alleviating and Reducing Poverty

These were the suggestions made by the youth.

- Put more money towards poverty reduction;
- Make more jobs available;
- Reduce unemployment especially among young people;
- Access to soft loans;
- Lower cost of living;
- Improved living conditions, better houses;
- Adult and continuing education;
- Opportunities for youth to pursue higher education;
- Scholarships to deserving students;
- Encourage and support the formation on youth groups;
- Build a rehabilitation centre for drug addicts;
- A centre for juvenile delinquents; and
- Improve the justice system.

### 6.7.4 THE ELDERLY

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Focus groups with elderly persons were conducted in nine of the twelve communities. One hundred and forty-five persons – forty-three men and one hundred and two women – participated in the discussions. The majority of them were over sixty-five years of age and forty-one were grandparents. A small number were employed as farmers, vendors and fishermen but several lacked the physical strength to work and some were some were retirees. Two of them had no formal education but seventy-eight of them had primary education and nine had secondary education. One had been to university and one had some technical and vocational education.

#### 6.7.4.1 Perception, Experience, Effect and Impact of Poverty

As with other groups elderly persons defined poverty as having nothing at all and being unable to maintain or help themselves or meet their needs.

*“Poverty is when you cannot afford anything.”*

*“I don’t have provision for me to eat nothing I don’t have.”*

*"Sometimes when I wake up I don't have breakfast, that is poverty."*

*"I really hungry, I dying of hunger."*

*"Poverty to me is I am at the bottom of it, I am inside it, I have nothing."*

*"I don't."*

*"Poverty is a hard thing when you can't maintain yourself."*

*"When you cannot supply your basic needs that is poverty."*

*"If you cannot help yourself you will be poor."*

Like other groups the elderly also said that their living conditions contributed to poverty and also resulted from poverty.

*"I don't have a house."*

*"Your house not in good condition."*

*"I don't have a toilet and wood ants eating my house."*

*"The house leaking."*

*"You have no water, no lights."*

*"I have a house but rats making nest in it."*

*"I need a toilet and a kitchen."*

While some of the participants said that they had inherited poverty, some others realised that even if they were not poor as yet, they were at risk of becoming poor.

*"I born and raise poor and I still poor."*

*"All my life I poor."*

*"When you poor you is poor you poor already."*

*"We accustom from young with our poorness and we are going to die with it because we not getting any better."*

*"I am not that poor now I can bear patience for two years but two days and one day from now I will be so poor that dog will bite me on the road."*

*"I am coming poor, poor."*

*"If the trend continue people will die."*

*"Once you do not have money you poor, I cannot be poorer than that."*

Some of the participants recognised that there were different stages and different levels and severity of poverty. However they were of the view that while they might be poor there were others who were poorer and that by comparison, poverty in Dominica was not as bad as poverty in some African countries.

*"It have different stages where people can be poor, really poor people are helpless."*

*"If you want to see poor people you have to go to Africa."*

*"Around here don't have people dying on the street in poverty."*

*"I am in need but not that poor others are more in need than me."*

*"I cannot say I am extra poor."*

*"I am not on the last page of poverty."*

*"To be indigent is to be poorer than poor."*

At the same time many elderly persons not only admitted that they were poor but identified things that were responsible for their being poor. Among these was their inability to work, lack of money, the high cost of living and utility bills,

*"I am poor because I not working and I don't have anybody to give me anything."*

*"I cannot work again."*

*"Yes I am poor I do not have any money to do what I want."*

*"Yes cost of living too high."*

*"I consider myself to be poor, I cannot pay the bills."*

Participants also provided information that highlighted the link between age and poverty. Several elderly persons shared experience that showed that as they got older they had become poorer and that this was mainly because they were now unable to work.

*"As age goes up life goes down."*

*"When I was young I work hard but age growing on me so I cannot work again."*

*"I am sickly and cannot work again and all that I had gone."*

*"I cannot do anything much now."*

*"When you young you work you make house and care for your children but now you are seniors when you in our sixties you cannot repair the house and you living in a state of poverty."*

*"I worked so hard and now I have nothing and nobody to help me."*

*"I cannot work again, I am eighty-eight years old, I cannot pay my bills."*

*"Sometimes I hungry but haven't got food to eat."*

*"These times are worse than times before."*

Because many elderly persons are poor they often have to depend on others for their survival and to provide their basic needs. Some depend on children and other relatives, some on neighbours, and several on pension or assistance from the welfare department. However while the assistance they receive from these sources is essential it is often not enough to meet all of their needs.

*"My expenses are higher than I received."*

*"You have to depend on people to help you."*

*"I receive a little pension from England."*

*"Our children are good but we cannot depend on them they have their family responsibilities as well."*

*"My children looking after me and welfare giving me a little something."*

*"My son helps me but it is not enough to sustain me."*

*"I sought public assistance but was not recommended."*

*"I get welfare but it not enough to pay the bills."*

*"Social security benefits so small and most of it have to go to the doctor."*

*"I poor because government not helping me with my situation."*

Poverty affected elderly persons in many negative ways. It made them feel uncomfortable, unhappy, abandoned and helpless.

*"Being poor makes me feel depressed."*

*"We are vulnerable because we are poor."*

*"I don't have anything and no-one to help me."*

*"I am eighty-eight years old and I live alone and I am half-blind, and someone is not always around to help me."*

*"If something happen to me I cannot call anybody."*

*"I am already old so I have to pack myself in a corner."*

*"I feel defenceless because no love is being shown by the community."*

*"Old age makes me feel powerless."*

Some also said that because they were poor they were vulnerable and at risk and that they were being disadvantaged, ridiculed, and discriminated against.

*"We are vulnerable because we are poor."*

*"When you are poor you always at a disadvantage."*

*"Begging could put you at risk."*

*"Instead of being helped we are ridiculed."*

*"You feel bad when you poor cause everybody looking down on you."*

*"Oh yes, people taking plenty advantage."*

*"When you pass they cast remarks at you."*

*"Some of them call us witch."*

*"Instead of taking care of us they put us down."*

*"When you reach a certain age there are lots of advantages you cannot get again. You cannot go in the bank and get a loan."*

A significant number of elderly persons also said that being poor affected their ability to maintain good health and several suffered from various illnesses and diseases but were often not able to purchase the required medication. A few were also had a disability.

*"Poverty definitely affecting health."*

*"Being poor put a lot of pressure on your mind."*

*"I sick and don't have no food."*

*"The only way it affecting me is because I sick and not able to buy medicine."*

*"If you want a bottle of tonic you can't buy it."*

*"Cannot pay for doctor's visit."*

*"I worry because I can't send the children to school as I would like."*

*"Unable to pay for the medication."*

*"Three months now I get a prescription but I don't buy it yet, it too expensive, I can't afford it."*

*"I suffer from arthritis, hypertension, I can't do anything."*

*"I am diabetic and have heart problems but I can't afford to pay for the ECG."*

*"I have eye problem I need a glasses but cannot afford them. Two years now I trying to buy a glasses but I don't have that kind of money."*

*"I have a hernia. I need an X-ray but I didn't have the \$500 so I stay sick."*

In spite of their age many several elderly persons not only have the responsibility of caring for themselves and meeting their own needs, but also still have responsibility to care for spouses, children and grandchildren. These responsibilities not only put added pressure on them, but ill health sometimes limits their ability to undertake their responsibilities as they did before.

*"Whether is in my home or the garden is me responsible for everything."*

*"Well my husband sick and I only getting \$100 a month."*

*"I have five children, not one of them can help me."*

*"I do not have a husband, I have children."*

*"Try to ease my daughter's burden and to help her children."*

*"My responsibility is to help my children and grandchildren."*

*"I am the oldest at home so when my grandchildren go to school is me that have to clean and cook."*

*"I have two children and two grandchildren, but when food sharing in the neighbourhood I don't get, they don't offer me."*

#### 6.7.4.2 Access to Resources

Elderly persons need several resources in order to survive but according to them, access to resources is either difficult or limited. They saw access to financial resources and money as essential. However, because many were no longer able to work, they had no steady income, and while some did receive pension and assistance from welfare the amounts received were small and insufficient to meet their basic needs and to allow them to access quality health care and medication.

In addition some experienced difficulty in collecting pensions because they were unable to produce the required documents, and others were of the view that while they were unable to get assistance others less deserving were able to do so. At the same time, because of their age, those who were still able to work often found it difficult to obtain employment, to get jobs that paid well or to obtain loans or credit.

Elderly persons in rural communities saw land as an important resource, and while many had cultivated land when they were younger they had never had title to the land, and now that they were older they some were unable to make as much use of this resource as before.

Proper housing is also essential but several do not have access to this resource and are forced to live in substandard housing. Lack of financial resources prevents many from repairing their houses and of having amenities like proper toilet facilities.

The majority were of the view that government had some responsibility to provide more resources to senior citizens.

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

Having a sense of well being and being able to live a good quality of life depends on being able to have everything that you need, good health and strength, good relationships and being able to enjoy life.

*"For me a good life is being able to finish my house."*

*"A good life is not just eating good but enjoying life with family, friends and neighbours."*

*"Even if you poor, once you have good health life is great."*

Several people said that they were satisfied with their lives mainly because they were unable to do anything about it others said because they had survived in spite of hardships, and because of their faith in God.

*"I am satisfied because I living a good life. I do not have to beg anybody."*

*"We are satisfied with what the Lord give us."*

*"I must be satisfied because better can't be done."*

*"Even though you poor what can you do?"*

*"Well being is centred in God."*

*"Even though I sick I am always happy under the grace of God."*

*"I am happy till the Lord come for me."*

However several were not satisfied.

*"Once you poor you just cannot enjoy life."*

*"We can't be satisfied with the cost of living."*

*"I am not satisfied. Things I used to do I can't do them no more."*

*"I am not satisfied because I still need to repair my house."*

Because of their age many said that their dreams and aspirations were few, but while many wished to meet their God, some others still wished for better housing and for money.

*"I do not have nothing to achieve again."*

*"My goal is heaven I am waiting to go to my goal."*

*"To have my own house."*

*"Money"*

#### **6.7.4.4 Coping Strategies**

Elderly persons provided information which showed that the majority are finding it difficult to cope and that their survival is often threatened. Some people shared some of the strategies that they had used to survive when they were younger. However they recognised that because of their age they were no longer able to use them, could not take risks that they had taken when they were younger, and that some of their former strategies were no longer relevant.

They all complained about having to cope with the high cost of living and about having to do without. Some said that they just accepted their situation and lived one day at a time, some said that they economized and improvised, others that they depended on children and other people, and a few had small income-generating activities like vending agricultural produce and other things.

Several said that they took one day at a time, made good use of whatever they had, sometimes did without essential things like food, and relied on the grace of God for their survival.

#### **6.7.4.5 Concerns and Needs**

The elderly persons had many concerns, not only about their own well being but about young people and about their communities.

**Personal concerns** included:

- Lack of money;
- No regular income;
- Inability to provide their basic needs;
- The high cost of living, especially the cost of food and utility bills;
- Their health and the difficulties that they faced in obtaining good health care and essential medicines;
- Having to live in poor housing conditions;
- Absence of markets for their agricultural produce; and
- Absence of care for the elderly.

**Concerns about young people** included:

- The unacceptable behaviour of young people;
- The number of school dropouts;
- Unemployment of youth; and
- The number of young people involved in crime and drugs.

**Concerns about their communities** included:

- Better recreational facilities for young people;
- Loud music at night;
- Too much garbage not being collected;
- The lack of presence of the Parliamentary Representative;
- Lack of cooperation and unity;

Elderly persons also identified several needs including:

- Money, a regular income;
- Markets for agricultural produce;
- Food and nutritious meals;
- Proper housing;
- Assistance to repair houses;
- Free health care and medication;
- Better care for the elderly;
- A home for the elderly;
- Senior citizens' groups; and
- Removal of VAT from elderly persons.

#### **6.7.4.6 Suggestions for Alleviating and Reducing Poverty**

They include:

- Improvement in housing conditions;
- Increase in pensions;
- More employment opportunities; and
- Youth skills training.

#### **6.7.5 UNEMPLOYED**

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One hundred and twenty-seven persons participated in the focus group discussions. Of these, forty-one were males and eighty-six were females. Sixty-three were between the ages of twenty and forty-five years of age; seventy-one had primary education and twenty-three had secondary education.

Although this focus group was for unemployed persons, thirty-nine or about one third of the participants were farmers, one was a fisherman and one a vendor, all of whom presumably saw themselves as being unemployed. This raises questions about people's perception, understanding and beliefs about the concepts of employment, unemployment, underemployment, and self-employment. It appears that some self-employed persons did not necessarily believe that they were employed.

### 6.7.5.1 Perception, Experience, Effect, Impact

Poverty was seen as the inability to meet basic needs, to provide for self and family, to afford things that were wanted, and to pay bills. For many, poverty meant not having anything at all.

*"Well you can't provide food clothes and a home for your family."*

*"When you don't have anything to eat, no clothes to wear and nowhere to live."*

*"Poverty is when you don't have nothing."*

*"Poverty is a crime."*

According to the unemployed persons who participated in the discussions, not having a job from which to earn an income contributed to poverty.

*"Poverty means a lot when you are not employed."*

*"Without employment you left nowhere."*

*"When you have no work."*

*"When you cannot get work."*

*"Living a financially difficult life."*

*"We have no work to do, no money."*

*"When you have no work no money doesn't come in so you can't maintain your home."*

*"We don't have cash so don't have the things we need."*

*"When you want to buy clothes you cannot."*

Several people said that they were not poor but less fortunate. Some of these 'not poor' not only resented being called poor, but they compared themselves to people in other countries and many believed that once they were able to eat at least one meal a day and meet some of their expenses they were not poor.

*"I really not poor compared to other people in Africa or even in Dominica. I don't have a job but I have clothes and I eating, I never hungry."*

*"Poverty is things you see on TV, children with no water and no clothes taking care of their brothers and sisters."*

*"We not poor; it have certain things we can't afford but at least we eat every day."*

*"It have people that don't have nothing."*

*"I eat a meal every day."*

*"I have food on my table and though I hustling to feed my children I not poor."*

*"I don't eat every day but I don't consider myself poor."*

*"I am poor only as far as material things are concerned."*

*"I am not poor because I not going in the garbage and look for food."*

At the same time many of the participants admitted that they were poor and talked about how poverty affected them. It affected their self-esteem and created in them feelings of sadness, neglect, shame and embarrassment, and even thoughts of suicide.

*"Of course I poor I don't have a job and things real tight with me."*

*"It make you feel down and out."*

*"When you poor you in deep trouble."*

*"You hurting inside but on the outside you not letting it show."*

*"It hurtful, like everybody forget you alive."*

*"Left out is like you don't even have a say in being around."*

*"I was going to throw myself anywhere."*

*"Sometimes low self-esteem."*

*"Feel bad, frustrated when you cannot pay your bills."*

*"Since I know myself I working to provide for myself, but last August the hotel I was working for closed so I now unemployed, if frustrating."*

*"I feel like you not wanted in society you don't belong here."*

*"I am poor; I cannot meet my daily needs and that grieves me. I see myself as a cripple, I cannot reach nowhere."*

*"When you poor you just like a dog you begging people for things."*

*"It embarrassing everything you want you have to ask your husband."*

*"I always hungry. My neighbour have to give me food."*

*"I depend on my family to help me."*

*"If I don't have I beg."*

*"Is people that helping us."*

*"When you have a family overseas, you will get a little clothes and a little food or something."*

Participants said that poverty could have a negative effect on families and on relationships with partners. At the same time it not only limited their ability to provide for their children's education, but it also affected their relationships with them.

*"It put a strain on the family."*

*"When you don't have material things to give your partner they say bye bye."*

*"I looking for someone who better than me mentally, more educated and with more ambition so she will help build me up."*

*"Every time we have to buy school stuff for our children we don't know where we getting it from."*

*"When you have four kids and have nothing to give them to eat or drink or to go to school."*

*"Unconsciously we rough up the children."*

*"If you ignorant, you passing all your frustration on your children."*

Poverty also affected their health.

*"Poverty gives headaches."*

*"Makes me worry."*

*"I feel depressed, is like nothing going your way and nothing you try not working."*

*"I feel breakdown as if nowhere else to turn."*

*"Unable to meet medical expenses."*

*"Well it tight; medical bills very high and some of us can't go to private doctor."*

*"My husband is a diabetic and when we don't get medicine in the health centre we have to buy it and because we don't have the money it can be scary for us."*

*"I don't have bathroom and toilet."*

Those who considered themselves to be poor agreed that they were vulnerable and that they were often at risk because of desperation and some of the things that they had to do to survive. Some people were tempted to steal and become engaged in other illegal activities, some women turned to prostitution and some men to homosexuality.

*"Plenty things come to your mind to do."*

*"Poverty cause me to be delinquent."*

*"If a drug dealer come to me I won't refuse him."*

*"You can become a murderer."*

*"Theft, use and abuse of drugs and praedial larceny are on the increase."*

*"Sell my body to bring in food."*

*"I go outside to look for man, do what I have to do...sex."*

*"You can be a buggerer."*

*"More sex abuse because of unemployment."*

They also believed that because they were poor they were being exploited, discriminated against and excluded.

*"When you poor people take advantage of you. They make you work for nothing."*

*"When you not working and you poor your neighbours, friends and even family want to take advantage of you and walk on you."*

*"Poverty puts me in a class I don't want to be in."*

*"People who are able to help you want to abuse you sexually, you have to give them sex in return."*

*"I may have a good idea but just because I don't have funds to back it up I might not be recognised."*

*"My voice is not heard. I don't have a voice."*

*"Poverty makes you withdraw from other people in the society. You stay at home and don't mingle with who are more able than you."*

*"I don't belong in society, I have nothing so I don't belong nowhere."*

#### **6.7.5.2 Access to Resources**

For unemployed persons, jobs, more employment opportunities, and regular incomes were the most important resources.

*"Money coming under everything."*

*"Money and things will work out."*

*"We have no jobs and no money."*

Access to credit was also regarded as a resource to which people could have access, but lack of a job and of collateral had prevented unemployed persons from applying or getting loans in the bank or obtaining credit from some business places. Some people also saw skills and training as resources which could allow them to gain employment; but for many access to these was also limited.

Another important resource was land, but while this was sometimes available it was often inaccessible. Proper housing was also seen necessary but many were unable to acquire, own, or repair their houses.

#### **6.7.5.3 Sense of Well Being and Quality of Life**

All of the participants agreed that to have a sense of well being and to be able to live a good quality of life depended on possession of material things and on being able to meet basic needs, as well as on things like good health, independence, positive self-concept and self-confidence, happiness, and belief in God.

*"Is having everything we need."*

*"Once you are in good health."*

*"Independence. I can depend on myself for everything."*

*"I feel good about myself even though I am poor."*

*"You cannot have a good life without God."*

At the same time several of the participants said that being able to develop yourself and being able to achieve goals also contributed to a sense of well being and a good quality life. However because of poverty most of them had been able to achieve these.

*"Lack of opportunities."*

*"I lack the resources to do what I want and this is preventing me from moving forward."*

*"I just don't have the requirements to make me a better person."*

*"Progress retarded."*

*"Can't do things to develop yourself."*

*"You just cannot get a grip on things."*

*"Deprives me of who I want to be."*

*"On and off short-term employment. Money have to be used to meet immediate needs so cannot save towards any long-term goals."*

*"Our goals will be fulfilled when all the children got a sound education."*

Being unemployed and unable to meet basic needs, the majority of the participants were dissatisfied with their lives.

*"I am not satisfied."*

*"I not satisfied because I unemployed."*

*"Can't meet my basic needs."*

*"The unemployment situation, you can't provide for yourself."*

*"Can't go nowhere cannot save."*

*"Can't go out because of the way I dress."*

*"We attempt to improve our quality of life but we fail."*

At the same time while the major reason given for their dissatisfaction was unemployment, other causes were also mentioned. Several persons mentioned lack of education, and some of the women admitted that early and multiple pregnancies had seriously affected the quality of their lives and their sense of well being.

*"The level of education preventing you from being what you could be."*

*"I feel to go and take classes, but I have too many children."*

*"Life before was better when I didn't have all them children."*

*"We didn't learn about contraceptives in our days, so we just go and do something and we get pregnant."*

#### **6.7.5.4 Coping and Survival Strategies**

In spite of being unemployed, participants coped with their situations and used a number of strategies to survive. Among these were spending money wisely, compromising and economising, using charcoal instead of gas to cook, making sacrifices, sharing with each other, doing without, living one day at a time, and praying to God.

*"Pay bills in instalments."*

*"Eat local foods, they are healthier."*

*"We taking it one day at a time."*

*"We cope with whatever is available."*

*"One foot in and one foot out."*

*"I does wash and iron for some people sometimes and they does give me a little food sometimes."*

*"We eat leftover food, we eat that a lot."*

*"When we don't have we stay without."*

*Sacrifice, leave yourself behind and give it to the children."*

*"Sometimes you depend on family."*

*"Depend on friends and relatives overseas."*

*"Get a little welfare."*

*"I praying to God to make things better."*

In addition several admitted being involved in illegal activities and taking risks and many felt that these were their only choices. They gambled, stole, sold drugs, engaged in risky sexual behaviours, including prostitution and homosexuality.

*"Sometimes you have to sell drugs."*

*"I steal sometimes."*

*"I does beg."*

*"Is not really what you want to do but you don't have a choice."*

*"Gamble and sex now and again."*

*"I take man."*

*"Illegal things you have to go to court."*

*"I hunt during the non-hunting season."*

*"I doh risk my life."*

It was also mentioned that selling children was sometimes used as a survival strategy.

#### **6.7.5.4 Challenges, Concerns and Needs**

Unemployed persons face many challenges as they struggled to survive. Among these was finding employment to be able to adequately provide for themselves and their families and to give their children a good education.

*"Sometimes you get a job but because the economy getting tighter every day they have to lay you off and you back home."*

*"I was working and they lay me off."*

Many attempted to find jobs but several things stood in their way. Some unemployed women who had young children did not receive any financial support from the children's fathers, and even if they wanted to look for a job they had no-one with whom to leave them. At the same time even if there was a day care centre, some would not be able to afford to send them.

*"Some of us who unemployed have to depend on our boyfriends or children father."*

*"Their father not sending nothing for them to get to eat."*

*"If you have kids you can't just leave them there and go and look for a job."*

*"If you leave them and go they call welfare for you."*

In addition some did not have the required qualifications and experience.

*"You as a mother cannot get a job because you not qualified, you don't have subjects."*

*"I move around looking for a job right, but maybe my qualifications not up to date."*

*"Maybe I not qualified, I don't have too much qualification."*

*"Because you haven't got no work experience you become unemployed."*

Some were concerned about their children's future and their inability to allow them to further their education.

*"The higher they go in their forms the more expensive it get."*

*"Next year my children leaving fifth form to go to college but I don't know where I getting the money to send them."*

*"Making sure that my children get their high school education."*

Some people in a few of the communities were concerned about superstition and the use of obeah, and about its effect on the community.

For some, fluency in Creole but not in English was a challenge that limited their ability to communicate effectively in some situations. Coupled with this, a major concern for many people was the lack of response from officials to their pleas for assistance.

*"We fed up talking nobody hearing our cry."*

*"We not seeing anybody reaching out to us."*

*"He tell us to bring a list to get work but no-one get any work."*

*"Agriculture is our main source but government not recognizing it."*

#### **6.7.5.5 Needs**

The most urgent need for unemployed persons was for:

- Employment, and for opportunities to obtain jobs from which they could earn incomes that would enable them to meet their basic needs, to provide for their families and to achieve their goals in life;
- Availability of land for agriculture;
- Adult education programmes, including evening classes for young people as well as adults;
- Skills training programmes in their communities to teach a number of skills that people could use to be self-employed or to obtain jobs;
- Summer programmes for children;
- Better houses with facilities like toilets and bathrooms;
- Assistance in repairing houses; and
- Better representation from Parliamentary Representatives.

#### **6.7.5.6 Suggestions for Alleviating and Reducing Poverty**

The participants made several suggestions for improving conditions and reducing poverty, and they believed that if their suggestions were taken seriously, conditions would improve and poverty would be reduced. These were their suggestions.

- Jobs;
- The government and the private sector need to make more jobs available;
- Think about ways to create more employment;
- Increase salaries;
- Lower the cost of living;
- Reduce taxes;
- Provide unemployment benefits;
- Lower the cost of fertiliser and find markets for agricultural produce;
- Purchase Bay Oil on a regular, not seasonal basis;
- Construct feeder roads;
- Promote rearing of livestock;
- Upgrade the fish landing site;
- Establish a training and craft centre in the Carib Territory;
- Title for Carib lands;

- Adult education;
- Women's Bureau should organise skills training for women;
- Computer literacy;
- Make education and health care free to all;
- Provide people with materials to repair their houses;
- Improve roads;
- Provide a proper bus service to transport school children;
- Provide proper recreational facilities for young people;
- Government should assist some people in paying hospital bills;
- Government must listen to the voice of the people;
- Government must stop making false promises; and
- Community Management committee to make sure that various organisations play their roles in helping the communities to develop.

## 6.7.8 PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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Because of the small numbers of such persons in individual communities, a discussion was held with PWDs from several communities, including a few PWDs in the Carib territory. Overall about thirty people participated in the discussions, and some of these were parents of children with disabilities and representatives of the Dominica Association of Disabled People. The majority of the participants were between twenty and forty-five years, but eleven were between forty-five and sixty-five and one was over sixty-five. Several of those without disabilities, parents and representatives of DADP were employed.

### 6.7.8.1 Perception, Experience, Effect and Impact of Poverty

In addition to inability to provide for basic needs, many of the PWDs saw poverty as a disease and a crime which robbed them of their dignity and prevented them from being self-reliant.

*"Our disability is a hindrance to earning money."*

*"Poverty is a disease of the pocket."*

*"If you getting something from Welfare and you manage to get a little job, Welfare taking away what little they giving you. They say you working"*

*"Look at my condition – I cannot work to do nothing to bring in money."*

*"I am physically disabled not mentally disabled so I need a job."*

They therefore saw a direct links between poverty and disability.

*"Disabled people are the poorest of the poor."*

*"Poverty is a disease."*

*"It is a crime."*

*"Poverty is a sickness when you there home you cannot get something to do, you ask yourself why."*

*"Creates conditions that do not promote or ensure dignity."*

*"Prevents you from being self-reliant and builds dependency."*

*"Poverty is bad – you cannot help yourself if you blind."*

*"The poorer you are the more disabled you become."*

*"Of course I poor if I was not disabled I would do something to help myself"*

*"Because of a big expenditure on my eyes and a drop in income I am poor."*

Parents of children with disabilities shared their experiences of how poverty affected them and their children.

*"I have a twenty-year-old daughter who lives with me; she wears pampers and has to be fed through her nose by tubes. The bedroom is leaking but I can't fix it because I cannot leave her to go out to work."*

*"I have a child with autism. It takes three times the money to care for this child. I am impoverished."*

*"I have a thirty-year-old disabled son, I am not rich. I am poor."*

*"I have an eighteen year old daughter who wants her own bedroom for privacy, but I cannot work so can't afford to build a proper house."*

If PWDs are to live a comfortable life they need support, care and assistance not only from family but from appropriate institutions. However in many cases these were missing, unavailable or inaccessible. Consequently even when services and assistance were available some PWDs were unable to access them.

*"The fathers abandon the children once they realise that they are disabled."*

*"Lack of support from families."*

*"Some families will not even give you a meal, thank God for Welfare."*

*"If someone doesn't give you have nothing at all."*

*"The absence of transportation to get to the health centre."*

*"The system is not in place to deal with disabled people in the Carib Territory."*

*"Is me alone sometimes my leg swells up and I can't move I have to wait for someone to pass and help me."*

*"I cannot hold my broom or knife to do anything, but there is no-one to help me."*

At the same time, while over-protection by family members could prevent them from undertaking responsibilities, some were training their children to be responsible and self-reliant by giving them chores.

*"I trying to teach my son to be more independent but I not making much progress."*

*"I train my son to perform chores and give him moral support."*

*"Blind people have potential."*

Like poverty, having a disability affected people in several negative ways. As indicated above, it not only robbed them of their dignity, but it also made them vulnerable to scorn, insults, ridicule and abuse, to discrimination, abandonment and exclusion.

*"People scorn you. If they sitting next to you and they see you blind, they get up and go to another seat."*

*"Sometimes other children don't even want to sit down by her in church."*

*"They cast all kinds of remarks. You hear and play you don't hear."*

*"Not able to go out to parties or just to go out."*

*"Some people reject you, some rejoice at your condition and come criticise."*

*"You are ridiculed by society."*

*"The first woman you talk to say they don't want you because you blind."*

*"Can't get credit from financial institutions."*

*"Not able to participate in activities which you are interested in."*

*We not accepted in the community."*

As a result many of the participants who had disabilities and who were poor experienced feelings of hurt, anger, and even thoughts of suicide and murder.

*"It hurts me when I think of the way I was before and how I am now."*

*"I feel angry and I ask myself why me."*

*"I feel so unhappy when I cannot do a simple task like sweeping my house."*

*"I feel irritated. Everything gets to me when I cannot provide for myself."*

*"I get annoyed when I cannot walk and when I think about the things I used to be able to do, I think about killing myself."*

*"If I meet the person who make me this way, I will kill him. I mean that."*

In spite of the existence of laws to protect the rights of PWDS, and the belief that the ratification of the Convention of the Rights of PWDs should ensure that they were represented, many were of the view that people with disabilities were being deprived of their rights. Some said that because of their disability they had been denied the right to

work, to education, to better health care and to appropriate facilities. Some also felt that PWDs should be more aware of their rights, should advocate for access to and control of the resources that they needed, that laws should be enforced and that DAPD should be strengthened.

### 6.7.8.2 Coping and Survival Strategies

Most PWDs are responsible for managing themselves and their homes and many do not allow their disability prevent them from doing so. They shared their experiences of how, in spite of their disabilities, they coped.

*"I am able to wash and clean the house, when my friends visit they marvel at the way the house is kept clean."*

*"I feel the place with my hand."*

*"When I am home I don't sit in the wheel chair, I walk on my hands. When I am working I wear a glove on my left hand for support and work with my right hand."*

*"I use my talking clock to cook, If I decide to fry chicken, every seven minutes the clock will tell me if it's time to turn it off."*

*"I use my nostrils to determine when food is cooked."*

*"I look for the pot, place it level on the stove and light the burner."*

*"I know my home so that makes things easy."*

While some depended on Welfare they were of the view that the amounts received were insufficient and they were annoyed that if they received any other help Welfare could withdraw their assistance. At the same time some received no assistance from the government.

*"I receive welfare assistance on a monthly basis."*

*"Welfare giving you \$100, if you get a new clothes they cutting it off."*

*"I have received a stipend from Social Security and more recently from my church."*

*"My son gets no help from Central government."*

*"We don't get anything from government."*

Some rely on family support and assistance from friends, some lived on handouts and some coped by the grace of God.

*"I ask for assistance when I can't do things because of my disability."*

*"I survive on pension and assistance from my church."*

*"Good family support help me to cope."*

*"Help from families overseas."*

*"Assistance from my seven children who are everything to me."*

*"Get help from friends to assist with planting."*

*"I living on handouts. But living on handouts is a poor thing. Sometimes three neighbours bring food today and tomorrow nothing."*

*"I does beg."*

*"By God's grace and mercy."*

A number of the participants who could work in spite of their disabilities engaged in income generating activities like farming and backyard gardening, and one worked in a bakery. Others economised, and used what they had wisely.

*"Find ways to stretch the dollar."*

*"Eat twice a day rather than three times."*

*"Use local items for cooking."*

*"Listen for sales and bargains."*

### **6.7.8.3 Suggestion for Improving the Living Conditions of Persons with Disabilities**

Participants in the focus group discussions made the following suggestions that in their view were necessary to ensure that their special needs were met, and that they could live a comfortable life.

- The Dominica State College should train teachers to be able to teach disabled students
- Ratification of the Convention on the rights of the Disabled persons. Also the implementation of the Convention by making the necessary resources available.
- Decentralization of facilities for the disabled persons. Too many of the facilities are only available in Roseau.
- More assistance from the Government for children with disabilities.
- Welfare should pay more attention to the disabled.
- Banking institutions should have special provisions for persons with disabilities who are trying to own a home.
- Access to public facilities (wheelchair access) and public transportation.
- Members of the DADP should receive a stipend to assist them in meeting their basic needs (disabled living allowance).
- Members should be able to receive some sort of skill training in order to be able to earn an income.

- Members of DADP request a forum with Ministers and the Cabinet to put forward their ideas and suggestions in person.
- Social Security should have a special component as part of their benefits so that once a person is working and has a child with a disability, that person should qualify to receive some sort of monetary assistance or stipend for that “special need” dependent.
- Special provisions at the port and the airport for persons with disabilities. There should be specific treatment for persons with disabilities as well as a reduction in the charges at the port.
- A Referral Unit should be established to provide assistance for the disabled re fittings and special assistance (e.g. hearing aids, facilitation in entering preschool).
- Public Awareness campaign to reduce discrimination against persons with disabilities.
- More help/empathy from the Government.
- Home visits for bedridden citizens by Social Welfare workers.
- The Housing Revolution program should allocate a percentage of the houses to persons with disabilities.
- The Government should facilitate repayment options for the disabled to assist in home ownership.
- Disability Living Allowance should be given to all disabled not just to those who are unemployed because living with a disability is very costly.
- Social Services/Welfare should implement special policies that would provide assistance (home help) to assist the disabled in caring out daily chores and errands that might be difficult to carry out because of their disability.
- Education is the key; the disabled should be able to access all educational facilities and all levels of education, and special teachers should be provided at the schools to cater to the needs of the disabled students.
- The Government should engage in consultation with the DADP to collate a list of disabled persons as this would facilitate the provision of benefits to such persons.
- There should be a DADP representative on the Physical Planning board to ensure that all public buildings are equipped with access for disabled persons before they are approved for construction.
- The disabled should receive discounts at pharmacies when purchasing medical supplies.

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- Government should do an evaluation to determine the health needs of disabled persons.
- Day care should be available in the out districts so that mothers are able to leave their disabled children in a special care unit and seek employment.

## SECTION 7: THE HOUSEHOLDS

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Poverty and deprivation are felt most keenly in households and it is in households that poverty is passed on from one generation to the next. Interviews were conducted with heads of households and/or responsible adults in thirty-nine households. In selecting the households to be interviewed, care was taken to include households of different types that displayed different levels of poverty; specific criteria and purposive sampling were used by Research Facilitators to identify households to be interviewed.

While thirty-nine is a relatively small number of households, they represented the various types of households in the country. They included thirteen multi-generational households, five single-parent female-headed households and the same number of single-person male-headed households, three extended family households, and two sibling households. It can be assumed that in other communities which were not studied there would be similar types of households, that they would have similar characteristics as those studied, and that people in some of those households would share some of the same types of experiences as the members of households in which individuals were interviewed.

The interviews produced information about household members and their living conditions, about household assets and resources, about the household economy and about household needs. Information obtained during the interviews also provided insights into the perceptions of household heads and about their experiences of poverty and deprivation, identified factors that contribute to the conditions within which members of the households lived, and indicated the support networks and strategies they used to survive and sustain their livelihoods. Information was also obtained on intra-household dynamics including social and gender roles and relationships, and the gender division of labour within the households.

### 7.1 THE INTERVIEWEES

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Twenty six of the interviewees were female and thirteen were male. The smaller number of males interviewed resulted from their absence in the single-parent female-headed households and in some multigenerational households. As a result the information provided by female interviewees did not always provide insights into the experience of poverty and its impact on males in their households. However, because significantly more males participated in the focus group discussions a great deal of relevant information was obtained from them.

Twenty-six interviewees were head of their households, eight were partners of the household head, four were daughters of the head and one was the sister of the head. Twenty-six were single, ten were married, and three were widows.

## 7.2 HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

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The households that were studied display several characteristics that contribute to and result in their members being impoverished and having to live in poverty. Among these were the type and size of the house, the composition of the household, mating patterns and fertility of the head as well as of other members of the household, intra-household dynamics and relationships, assets and resources to which household members had access and the economies of the households. The information obtained during interviews shows that these all played a part in determining not only the type and severity of poverty, but also the quality of life and the sense of well being that household members experienced.

### 7.2.1 HOUSING CONDITIONS

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Thirty-one, or more than three quarters of the houses were built of wood, two were of wall and wood, four of wall, and two of other materials including galvanise. More than half of the houses had weak structures, almost as many were leaking, and a few had rotten floors.

*"The house very bad, some parts of the floor rotten."*

*"The house need repairs, the toilet and the plumbing bad."*

*"I living here since I ten years old and the house still the same."*

*"I ashamed of the house."*

*"I does worry about the bad condition of the house."*

*"My house like an animal house, when rain fall the bed getting wet and the children school books getting wet. I does put cloth in the ceiling to shade the water."*

The majority of houses had one or two rooms. Over half had one bedroom and nine of these were multi-generational households. Some of the one-bedroom houses had as many as seven, eight, ten and even fifteen persons, including children, living in the house. Just over a quarter of the houses had two bedrooms and a few had as many as ten persons living in the house. Overcrowding was therefore a problem, especially in multi-generational households.

*"No space, no privacy, the children can't dress."*

Eighteen houses or almost half had a kitchen inside but in sixteen, the kitchen was outside and six houses had no kitchen. Seven houses had a bathroom inside and in the same number the bathroom was outside, but just over half of the houses had no bathroom. Eight houses had a toilet inside and fifteen had pit latrines, but twenty-three houses had no toilets. In the absence of bathrooms and toilets, and of public baths and toilets, interviewees and other household members admitted to using the bush and gullies to defecate and to dumping faecal mater in rivers and seas. However they were well aware of the implications of these actions and of their negative impact on health as well as on the environment.

*"It miserable, no bathroom, no toilet. I have to go by other people or use the river or sea."*

While over seventy percent of the houses had access to pipe-borne water, the majority depended on public standpipes and only nine had a pipe inside. The majority had electricity and telephones. Electrical appliances are now regarded as necessities not as luxuries and most people try to acquire these. Over fifty percent of the houses had radios, TVs and fridges, twelve had washing machines and eleven had videos or DVDs. A significant number had gas stoves but in order to save gas, when gas ran out, or when they did not have the money to buy gas several of the interviewees used charcoal and wood for cooking.

More than half of the interviewees said that housing was bad and the information provided by many others who participated in PPA activities confirm this. The small size of houses and the poor conditions of many, the absence of conveniences, and people's inability to repair or improve their houses are evidence of the poor quality of housing and the unacceptable conditions in which many people have to live.

While this is the case in several of the communities, housing conditions in Silver Lake were especially bad. Here the majority of residents lived in barracks-like structures divided into single rooms with one window and one door and with no bathroom or toilet facilities and in some cases with rotting walls and floors and leaking roofs. Moreover, several of the residents indicated that they had been living in these "houses" for over twenty years and that their condition had deteriorated, and several said that they were living in slum conditions.

Housing is one of the indicators, and an important one, that is used to assess living conditions, to determine the existence of poverty in a community, and to determine the level of poverty that households are experiencing. Consequently if housing was used as an indicator it would be safe to suggest that a significant number of people in the country are living in poverty, and some in severe poverty.

## 7.2.2 TYPE AND COMPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLDS

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Of the households studied, thirteen were multi-generational, eleven were nuclear households, five were single-parent female-headed households and the same number of single-person elderly male households, three were extended family households, and two were sibling households.

One hundred and eighty-seven persons lived in the thirty-nine households. Eighty-four of these, thirty-eight males and forty-six females, were adults; and one hundred and three, fifty-seven males and forty-six females were children. The multi-generational households had eighty-eight persons, the largest number, and the nuclear households had fifty-eight persons. The single-parent female-headed households had twenty-five persons, extended family households had seven persons, the sibling households had eleven persons and the single-male elderly headed households had five persons.

One hundred children lived in the thirty-nine households. Twenty-six, an equal number of males and females were under five years of age. Thirty-five – twenty-one males and fourteen females – were between six and twelve years old; forty-two – twenty-three males and nineteen females were teenagers between the ages of thirteen and nineteen.

In ten of the households there were persons with disabilities who were being cared for at home by other members of their families. However, in many cases there were no special systems in place for caring for the persons with disabilities. As a result heads of these households and other household members faced several challenges in providing the necessary care for them.

*"She can take care of herself and family members assist."*

*"She is immobile, "I have to do everything for her, bathe her, feed her, she is big."*

*"He was in an accident, he is wild and plenty of trouble."*

*"I need to expand the house."*

In some cases the head of the household and other family members cared for and provided the needs of the person with disabilities. A few of the heads of households did receive small amounts of money, between \$150 and \$200 per month from the Social Welfare Department, but according to them this is insufficient to provide and to meet the needs of the persons with disabilities.

*"All her needs are provided by her brothers and sisters."*

*"We don't have the money to provide what is needed."*

*"Receives allowance from government."*

*"I does get \$200 from Welfare but it not enough."*

*"She short-sighted, she need glasses, but I can't afford."*

Table 7.1: Persons with Disabilities

TYPE OF DISABILITY	SEX	AGE	TYPE OF HOUSEHOLD	COMMUNITY
Physical	M	47	Nuclear	Carib Territory
Stroke/paralysis	F	50	Multi-generational	Scottshead
Head injury	M	27	Multi-generational	Carib Territory
Physical	M	-		
Mental disability	F	64	Multi-generational	Good Hope
	M	79		
Sight and hearing impaired	F	35	Single-parent female-headed	Fabre
Physical disability	M	48	Extended	Good Hope
Physical disability and epilepsy	F	38	Multi-generational	Penville
Mental disability	M	14	Multi-generational	Bellevue Chopin
Sight impaired	F	14	Multi-generational	Silver Lake
Physical	M	72	Multi-generational	Dubic

### 7.3 MARITAL STATUS, MATING PATTERNS AND FERTILITY

Twenty-two of the interviewees had partners and were in a relationship with someone of the opposite sex. Ten interviewees were married, seven were in a common-law relationship, and five were in visiting relationships. Several of the relationships were long-standing. Two were over twenty years duration, six were between eleven and twenty years in duration and four were between one and ten years. Sixteen of the interviewees said that their relationship was harmonious or good with only a few disagreements that they said were normal. However, five said that their relationships were characterized by verbal abuse, threats, and by violence.

*"It good so far."*

*"It good but we have the normal disagreements."*

*"The relationship not good, my husband quarrels all the time."*

*"He threaten to put me out but I have nowhere to go."*

*"He threaten me with a cutlass, and I reported it to the police."*

Serial mating and fertility patterns have resulted in early and multiple pregnancies for some women. Residents in ten of the communities identified teenage pregnancy as a problem and the data from interviews with heads of households confirm this. Information from the latter indicated that nearly half of the females interviewed had had their first child in their teens. Moreover, four of these had their first child at fourteen years of age, and two had had theirs at fifteen years. Three had had theirs at sixteen and five had had theirs at seventeen.

While some people were aware of the serious negative effects of teenage pregnancy on young girls, it is not clear whether all of those who provided relevant information regarded this phenomenon as child sexual abuse. At the same time, no evidence was obtained that showed that the male abusers had been brought to justice.

In a recent study of **Child Sexual Abuse in the Caribbean, Issues for Dominica**: The findings indicate that several people believed that the court system did not really encourage victims to report sexual abuse of children. At the same time, while some people thought that perpetrators of child sexual abuse should be severely punished, the findings of the report suggest that men who may be abusers are sometimes protected by their status in the society and in the community.

Patterns of serial mating and fertility have emerged from the information obtained in interviewees. The data show that several women had large numbers of children sometimes from more than one man. For example one of the interviewees had ten children from two men, another had nine children from four men, another eight children from six men and another seven children from five men. Of the eleven women had all of their children from the same man, two had thirteen children, one had ten, one had seven, and others had two, three, four and five respectively.

These patterns of serial mating and high levels of fertility appeared to be common in several of the households studied, and information provided by interviewees indicated that they had serious implications for the women and for their ability to provide for their children. In the majority of cases the fathers of their children did not provide any financial support, or if they did, they contributions were often small and provided irregularly. The full responsibility for providing not only basic requirements, but also educational and other needs often fell on the women, many of whom were unemployed or underemployed. As a result several of the women said that having so many children had contributed to their being poor and having to live in poverty.

*"Lack of support from children father."*

*"No money from the children father."*

*"No money to feed the children."*

*"Lack of money to provide for children."*

*"Can't provide for children education."*

*"I make a lot of children and can't support them."*

## 7.4 HOUSEHOLD HEADSHIP

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Over half of the households studied were headed by males. Females were heads in fifteen households, and in one household there was said to be joint headship. The interviewees identified several things that determined who was the head of their households. Among these was ownership of the house, being the male spouse or partner, absence of an adult male in the house, living alone, and taking responsibility for supporting the family.

- ***House ownership***

*"Is her home."*

*"The house is his father's."*

*"The house belongs to me."*

- ***Being male***

*"He is the head."*

*"It is the norm for man to be the head."*

*"Society looking at the man to be head."*

*"Men believe they are the head."*

*"Always the man."*

- ***Absence of an adult male***

*"No man living here."*

*"I don't have a husband, I am here alone."*

- ***Taking responsibility for the welfare of the family***

*"He is the provider, he has the bigger income."*

*"Me is the father, I responsible for all of them."*

*"I have to provide everything."*

*"He is the man, the breadwinner."*

*"He is responsible for all."*

*"He is the man but he don't take responsibility."*

## 7.5 POWER, AUTHORITY AND DECISION MAKING

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Power and authority usually reside in the head of household, in persons who are responsible for the welfare of household members, or in those who have or who control

resources, those who are older and those who make the decisions. Such persons are seen as authority figures and as the ones who have power. The data show that in seventeen of the households studied, power and authority was vested in the male heads, that in fourteen it was vested in the female heads and that in five households it was jointly shared.

*"I am the man I am the boss of the house."*

*"After me is she."*

*"What he says have to go."*

*"The children have to listen to him but I don't always listen."*

*"We do everything together."*

*"Equal power."*

*"No-one has extra power it is shared."*

Interviewees said power and authority meant taking responsibility and having and exerting control, and their statements reveal that gender and gender socialization are also factors in deciding who, male or female, would have power and authority in the home.

*"I take responsibility for everything."*

*"I in control."*

*"I have the power to do what has to be done."*

*"I take responsibility for everything."*

*"I contribute more to the house."*

*"The man always in control, since I raise up I hearing that."*

*"The man gives the power but she controls the money."*

*"She is the mother she in charge."*

*"No father, I am the mother and father so I in charge and I in control."*

In twenty-five of the households decisions were made by the male head of the household and in thirteen of the households there was joint decision-making. The major decisions were those related to the provision of food and other necessities for members of the households, how to bring up the children and how to manage scarce financial resources.

*"How to provide."*

*"How to handle the money."*

*"What to teach the children to do."*

## 7.6 EDUCATION OF HOUSEHOLD HEADS

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The education of persons who are heads of households is an important indicator of their ability to obtain well paid jobs and to be able to provide for and sustain their own livelihoods and those of their families. However the data show that the education level of the majority of household heads was very low. Ten heads of households had no formal education, and eleven only had primary education. Moreover some of the latter had not completed primary school and only one had a School Leaving Certificate. At the same time while eight heads of households did receive some level of secondary education, only two of these actually completed. One head of household had some technical and vocational training, two had tertiary level education and one of these had been to university.

The data also show that ten of the heads of households had dropped out of school before completing, three because they were pregnant and seven because their parents did not have the money to allow them to continue.

Failure to acquire formal education, especially at the primary level can result in illiteracy and the data show that illiteracy and functional illiteracy are problems being experienced by several of the household heads. Thirty-five of the heads of households said that they had problems reading and writing and a few of these said that they could only sign their names. It is however important to note that some of the interviewees might well be fluent in Creole but because they had not completed formal primary or secondary education were functionally illiterate in English.

*"I cannot read or write."*

Adult and continuing education provides opportunities for people to get a second chance to expand and complete their education, and while such programmes might well exist, the data show that thirty or about three quarters of the households were not participating in any such programmes. Moreover they gave the following reasons for not doing so.

*"I don't know of any programmes."*

*"There are no classes in the community."*

*"No time, I have to work."*

*"No-one to leave the children with."*

*"I never thought of it."*

*"The money not there."*

*"I can't afford it."*

*"They cost money and money is limited."*

From these responses it is clear that much more must be done to stress the importance of adult education and to motivate residents in the communities studied, as well as in other communities to participate in adult education programmes. At the same time, the Adult Education Unit must not only to motivate residents to participate in their programmes, but should also increase its efforts to make literacy and other programmes available to adults in the communities studied.

Participation in group and community activities and programmes also provides opportunities for people to interact with and learn from others. However the data show that the majority of the interviewees did not belong to any groups and did not participate in any community activities, programmes, or projects. They also show that among those who did participate there were fewer males than females. Females were members of church groups, of the Village Councils and of NGOs and CBOs, and a few even held positions of leadership and management in some of these groups. Males were members of the Village Council and of a few NGOs and CBOs. However it is not clear whether the existence of community groups and their activities, programmes, or projects help to improve the education levels of members of the households studied.

In spite of their low levels of education all of the interviewees understood the value of education and wanted their children to have higher levels of education than they had. Children in all of the households were therefore in school and most of them attended school regularly. Two children were in nursery school, twenty-eight were in primary school and thirty-one were in secondary school. The majority of children went to school every day, and only missed school if they were ill. However, a small number were kept home from school because of lack of money for lunch, school books, and bus fare. Several heads of households were concerned that because of lack of financial resources they were not able to allow their children to pursue further and higher education.

*"I don't have the money to provide for the children education*

*"I want to send all of my children to university."*

*"Children to finish school and get a good education."*

## **7.7 INTRA HOUSEHOLD DYNAMICS**

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People who live in the same households depend on each other for their survival and they must therefore develop harmonious relationships. Positive gender relations, parent-child relationships, sibling relationships and intergenerational relationships are critical for ensuring stability, mutual benefits from household resources, and for enabling household members to sustain their livelihoods. However the data show that while sixteen of the interviewees said that their relationships were good and relatively

harmonious, some others were characterized by conflict and confrontation, by disrespect, by verbal abuse, by quarrelling and fighting, and by domestic violence.

### 7.7.1 GENDER RELATIONSHIPS

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Twenty-two male and female interviewees who were in relationships spoke about their relationships and experiences with their partners. Sixteen of them said that their relationships were good but seven said the opposite. The latter cited quarrels, threats, verbal abuse and domestic violence as common events.

*"We have a good relationship."*

*"It good so far."*

*"It OK, we only have small misunderstandings."*

*"It not good we quarrel a lot."*

*"He threatens me, I have to run and hide."*

### 7.7.2 PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

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A major part of parents' responsibility is to provide, care for, supervise and discipline their children. On the whole children are not left unsupervised for long periods; however many parents, especially those who were impoverished, and mostly mothers and grandmothers, are often unable to provide their children's basic or educational needs and this affects their relationships with their children.

*"I can't provide for the children as I would like."*

*"Sometimes they does have to stay home from school because they don't have any lunch."*

*"When you can't give them what they want they does get vex with you."*

On the whole children are not left unsupervised for long periods, and did not create problems for their parents. The latter attributed this to how they had trained their children.

*"They are good children."*

*"They don't give me no problems."*

However several of the interviewees said that they had problems in dealing with their children and did not like their behaviour. They cited disobedience, indiscipline, rudeness, quarrelling and fighting.

*"My daughter don't obey."*

*"The big boy don't listen."*

*"It very difficult to deal with the young people."*

*"One of boys drinks rum and get drunk."*

*"My grandson in prison."*

*"The big girl stubborn."*

*"They does talk back to me."*

*"My granddaugther not a nice child, she very rude and she wouldn't do anything at all in the house, and she involved in a gang."*

*"It very difficult to deal with the young people."*

*"They want to get their own way."*

Some of the interviewees were of the view that young people were better behaved before and that the misbehaviour and indiscipline that they were displaying now had resulted from what they called lack of home training, the environment in which they were growing up, from poverty and from being abandoned by their parents. Grandparents were who had sole responsibility of caring for grandchildren and were themselves impoverished often found it exceedingly difficult to discipline them.

*"They need home training."*

*"Her father is my son. He and her mother her and neither of them support her so is up to me, but she will not listen to me."*

*"My daughter has three children but she don't get no help from their fathers so is me they with."*

*"They grandmother finds the children miserable and tells them to leave."*

The interviewees used several strategies to discipline their children. Fourteen of them talked to their children and scolded them, ten used corporal punishment, and five deprived them of privileges.

*"I does talk to them."*

*"I does ban them."*

*"I take way their privileges."*

*"I beat them when they get me vex."*

A few used more drastic measures that could be seen by some as unacceptable. For example one interviewee said that she chained her child to the bed when she misbehaved, another said that she pulled their ears, and two said that they threatened and cursed their children.

*"I chain her to the bed."*

*"When they don't hear I does pull their ears."*

*"Their father and my brother does curse them."*

Information provided by parents about children's and young people's unacceptable behaviours and about the difficulties that many parents and grandparents have in controlling and disciplining children suggests that more attention should be paid to the home and social environments in which children are growing up, as well as to existing child rearing practices.

In a recent **Survey of Students of Migrant Parents** carried by the **Central Statistical Office, Ministry of Finance and Social Security**, children who completed survey questionnaires made some interesting and important comments about:

- ***The role of parents***

*"I think parents should take more care of their children."*

*"I wish I was living with some other people other than my parents."*

*"I am happy with my parents, they are here to take care and provide for me and help me when I face difficulties."*

- ***Living with only one parent,***

*"I wish I was living with some other people other than my parents."*

*"Mother is working alone has difficulty in meeting needs sometimes."*

*"My father abandoned and neglected me."*

*"My mother needs more pay to properly support me, my brother and sister"*

*"My mother is a single parent and my father is married."*

- ***Lack of parenting skills***

*"I feel that Dominican parents lack proper parenting methods they do not know how to communicate with their children without abusing them and this can cause a child to become distraught."*

*"I wish my mother could love me more and communicate with me more."*

*"My mother says she would bounce my head on the wall."*

- ***Having to live with grandparents***

*"I don't like to stay with my grandmother she talks too much."*

*"My grandparents take good care of me."*

*"My grandmother beat me with a piece of whip."*

Although these comments were not made within the context of the PPA they are relevant to some of the experiences described by interviewees as well as the difficulties some of them faced in their efforts to provide for and discipline their children. On the other hand, the comments made by some of these children provide insights into their feelings about parents and describe their experiences of living with parents and with

grandparents. Most important though are the suggestions that these children made about how relationships between parents and children could be improved.

At the same time information provided by interviewees who were parents about children's and young people's unacceptable behaviours and about the difficulties that many of them and grandparents have in controlling and disciplining children suggests that more attention should be paid to the home and social environments in which children are growing up as well as to existing child rearing practices

It is important therefore that in any initiatives taken or programmes implemented to improve unacceptable behaviours of children and young people and to prepare parents to fulfil their roles effectively, that serious attention to both of these perspectives.

### 7.7.3 SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

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In many of the households siblings related well to each other and did things together. However in a few of the households this is not always the case as siblings quarrel and fight sometimes.

### 7.7.4 INTER-GENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

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Information provided by interviewees revealed the type and quality of relationships between children, young people and adults. In multi-generational households this included relationships with grandparents. On the whole relations were good. Children respected the adults and followed their instructions.

*"The relationship is good."*

*"They listen and sometimes sees the good in what she tells them."*

*"They may say she is old but they will sit and discuss things with her."*

*She respect people in the community."*

*"She have a good relationship with her grandfather."*

However a few showed little respect for adults including for their grandparents.

*"No respect for me."*

*"The relationship not always good."*

*"They don't obey her at all they curse her."*

*"They rude sometimes."*

*"No respect for me her grandmother."*

Adults in a few of the households did not approve of the attitudes and behaviour of young people in the household.

*"I don't always like the young people attitude."*

*"Young people before were better."*

## **7.8 GENDER DIVISION OF LABOUR**

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In all of the households studied, housework was organised along gender lines. Females did chores inside of the house including cleaning, cooking, and washing, and males mostly did chores outside of the house, including caring for animals and fetching water. Consequently while female adults and female children did practically all of the household chores, and a few males did help, most males did no household chores at all. However, in some households male as well as female children were given and expected to do chores.

The data confirm the belief that females are expected to be fully responsible for care and maintenance of the house and for doing all of the household chores and that the role of males in this process is "to help" when or if they are so inclined.

## **7.9 ASSETS AND RESOURCES**

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Assets include household goods and other things that can be translated into cash in times of need or emergency. They also include financial resources and social capital.

The assets that members of a household own and the resources to which they have access can determine if they will be able to meet their basic needs and to sustain their livelihoods. However the data show that many of the household heads interviewed had few assets and/or little access either to the kind or to the amount of resources that they needed to sustain their livelihoods, or to help them move out of poverty.

### **7.9.1 HOUSEHOLD ASSETS**

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Ownership of property and household goods are important and valuable assets, and the data show that interviewees valued home ownership, because nearly three-quarters of them owned the house in which they lived and nearly half owned the land on which their house was built. Very few were renting either house (4), or land (2), but eight were

living on family land and six were squatting. This means that money that would otherwise have gone into house and land rent was available to meet other needs.

Most households did have some furniture, most of which is owned by females. However in some cases this comprised only of a bed, a chair and sometimes a table and these were not always be in a good condition, and in some of the households there was no furniture at all. A few of the females said that they owned small pieces of jewellery mainly earrings or chains.

On the whole interviewees did not realise that social capital, the knowledge, skills and experience of household members were an important asset that in the absence of other tangible assets could be used to sustain their livelihoods. During interviews with household heads they were asked to identify skills that they or other members of the household had. Some people found this difficult or said that they had no skills, but the data show that members of several of the households did have some skills. Moreover the information provided by interviewees on the strategies that they used to cope and survive is evidence that they were making use of their individual knowledge, skills and competencies as well as of those of other household members, relatives, friends, and neighbours to sustain their livelihoods.

## 7.9.2 FINANCIAL RESOURCES

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Access to financial resources is critical for sustaining livelihoods. In the households studied, twenty-eight persons had savings accounts but the majority said that the amounts were small. Eighteen persons received wages or salaries and six obtained some income from other sources. Twenty were members of a credit union and three belonged to a *su su*. However, in spite of having these resources, the majority of the interviewees had little access to the amount of money they needed to meet their basic needs, to provide for their families and to sustain their livelihoods. Eight interviewees said that they had no access to any financial resources.

The data show that interviewees had several sources from which they obtained financial resources. Twenty-eight of the interviewees said that they obtained some income from paid employment, thirteen received remittances from abroad but these were often on an irregular basis and the amounts tended to be small. Fourteen of the interviewees depended on social welfare but they said that the small amounts received were insufficient even to meet all of their basic needs. The five elderly male interviewees depended on pensions, five female parents received some money from their children's fathers, but this too was often insufficient to meet the children's basic needs, and three females said that they sometimes got some money from their boyfriends.

Credit is a resource that is available not only from financial institutions, but from local shops and businesses, and from friends or relatives. However the ability to access depends on several factors including collateral, trust and goodwill, and the ability to repay. As a result, while some interviewees were able to access credit from friends or relatives based on trust and goodwill, because of lack of collateral, the majority were unable access or obtain credit from financial institutions.

Twenty-seven of the interviewees said that they did not credit and that they owed money to no-one. On the other hand, while twelve of the interviewees had made use of credit, the majority of these owed small amounts to shops or friends, to landlords or to the utility company. This suggests that credit was an important resource for meeting a basic need for food and shelter for their families. A small number who were better off owed larger amounts to financial institutions including the National Development Foundation, the mortgage company, and commercial banks.

*"Credit in the shop and pay when I get money."*

*"Pay some bills and leave some."*

### 7.9.3 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

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Community facilities and services are resources to which household members can have access, but such access can be limited by distance and costs. Usage and satisfaction with services being offered is determined by their type, number and quality, as well as by the attitudes of providers of the services. The data show that while interviewees in most of the communities did have access to educational facilities for their children, and that they are mostly satisfied with these, they were less satisfied with the availability of and access to other facilities and with the provision of services being offered.

Educational facilities and services and access to primary and secondary education were free and said to be generally acceptable. However, while there were day care and preschool facilities in some of the communities, there were fees attached and because some interviewees were unable to afford these, their children were missing out on early childhood education, an important aspect of their schooling.

Community centres or recreational facilities are also important because they can provide resources and services, including adult and continuing non-formal education programmes that promote and facilitate personal and community development. The data show that these facilities are absent in fewer than half of the communities studied.

An important finding of the PPA is the absence of private bathroom and toilet facilities in several of the communities as well as the absence of public toilet facilities in some of these communities and the unacceptable state of such facilities in communities in which

they existed. Heads of households who were interviewed, as well as many others who participated in other PPA activities, were very much aware of the dangers of this situation. They were also concerned about the implications for their health and that of their families, of their neighbours, and of their communities as a whole. The issue of appropriate toilet facilities is therefore one that needs urgent attention.

## **7.10 SOCIAL AND WELFARE SERVICES**

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Social and welfare services were being provided by government through the Welfare Department, and by NGOs like the Christian Children's Fund and the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The data show that a significant number of interviewees depended on social and welfare services to maintain their households and to sustain their livelihoods.

Fifteen of the interviewees said that they depended on social assistance from the Welfare Department, the single elderly interviewees depended on pensions, and two of the interviewees said that they received disability allowance. At the same time, several of the households in which there were children were also benefiting from the services and assistance being provided by the government. Twelve were receiving assistance with school books, five with school meals, four with school uniforms and some with transportation via the school bus. In addition some interviewees said that they were also receiving assistance with uniforms, school books and other essentials from NGOs.

### **7.10.1 HEALTH SERVICES**

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The provision of adequate and dependable health services is not only important but critical for persons who are impoverished and living in poverty. The data show that the majority of heads of households and their families depended on government health services to cater to and provide their health needs. Thirty-seven or the majority of the interviewees used the health clinic and/or the hospital and that thirty-four obtained medication from these institutions. However while some of the interviewees were of the view that the health services were generally good, several others were of the opposite view and cited absence of a permanent nurse, lack of essential medication and of an ambulance in cases of emergency..

*"We need a nurse here more often."*

*"No ambulance in case of emergency."*

Interviewees were particularly concerned about the lack of essential medication at some health centres and in the absence of money to purchase it from private pharmacies either had to do without or turn to traditional medicines.

*"The centre don't have the medication and I can't afford to buy it from the pharmacy."*

*"When I don't have the money to buy it I does do without the medication."*

*"I does buy some and leave the rest."*

*"I does use bush medicine."*

Interviewees identified several barriers and obstacles that prevented them from accessing, using and benefitting from some of the facilities and resources that were available. Among these were long waiting hours, red tape, lack of confidentiality, and the poor, unacceptable attitudes of some providers.

*"Yuh does have to wait too long."*

*"They does send you round and round."*

*"They don't know how to talk to people."*

*"They talking yuh business loud loud."*

*"They does insult yuh as if yuh come to beg."*

These statements from users of facilities and services suggests that the mere presence and availability of facilities and services is not enough, but that serious attention must be paid to the quality of the services being provided as well as to the attitudes of the service providers.

## **7.11 HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIES AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS**

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The economy of a household depends on the amount of money that is available as well as the sources from which household members obtain their incomes. This in turn depends on whether the latter are employed or not, on the type of jobs they do, and on their incomes. The incomes of the households studied are very fragile and many of the household heads have little, if any disposable income. This, added to the high cost of living makes it difficult for them to sustain their livelihoods.

*"Cost of living high, but salaries low."*

*"Things too expensive."*

### 7.11.1 EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

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*"Every man should work to have something in his life."*

All of the interviewees understood and recognised that it was important to work and to be able to work and earn an income so as to achieve. However the data show that in many of the households studied there were several persons who were either unemployed or underemployed.

Within the thirty-nine households studied there were thirty-seven persons – twenty-five males and twelve females, who were employed; and there were thirty-four – fourteen males and twenty females, who were unemployed. More males were therefore employed and more females were unemployed. Several of those who were unemployed did want jobs but found it difficult to obtain one.

*"I can't get a job."*

*"No-one to hold the children so can't go to work."*

*"No job, I not working but have to pay rent."*

*"If you don't have a job, what can you do?"*

While twice as many males as females were employed, more females than males were self-employed. Twenty-eight of those employed, an equal number of males and females, were working part-time and twenty-seven, sixteen females and eleven males were working full-time.

The majority of those employed were working in low-skilled low-paying jobs. Twenty-one interviewees – thirteen males and eight females were engaged in agriculture, mainly in small-scale subsistence farming or in backyard gardening, and a small number were labourers on estates. Eighteen interviewees – eight males and ten females were vendors, some selling agricultural produce in the markets, or producing and selling craft items. Six males were involved in fishing and therefore depended on seasonal employment. A small number owned shops and a few of the women sold barbecued meats and other food items. Ten males worked in the construction sector, eleven women were domestic workers, and nine interviewees – five females and four males depended on odd jobs.

*"I try to sell little things when I get money to buy them."*

While the data do show that several persons were employed, they also show that because of low wages many could be called the "working poor." It is also clear that there was gender segmentation of the labour market and that males were more likely to be employed in traditional male sectors like construction and females in traditional female sectors like domestic work, craft, and vending. Wages being earned by females who

worked in the latter were therefore more likely to be lower than those paid to males in the construction sectors.

### 7.11.2 HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

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The incomes of the households studied were generally not only very low, but in some cases non-existent. Sixteen, of the interviewees said that they did not receive any income on a regular basis. Eight said that they received money weekly and that this varied between \$100 and \$200 per week, three said that they received an average of \$200 per fortnight; while twelve of the interviewees received monthly incomes, ten of these said that they received between \$100 and \$500 per month. However, two interviewees received between \$800 - \$900 per month and two over \$1000 per month.

Absence of a fixed or regular income presented households with several challenges including insufficient money to meet basic and other needs of their families. All of the interviewees spent most of whatever money they obtained on food, but they were often unable to meet other basic needs like house repairs and/or the educational needs of their children. In addition, because of the high costs of utility and other bills they were also often unable to pay their bills.

*"Lack of money."*

*"No money to buy food."*

*"Can't pay the bills."*

*"I ma a labourer I don't get much money."*

*"The salary so low it is nothing it can only do for a time."*

*"Salary limited, haven't got enough spending power."*

The majority of household heads therefore found it very difficult to manage and to sustain their livelihoods

## 7.12 COPING AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

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The data show that people who are poor and who live in poverty use a number of strategies to cope with their situation and to sustain their livelihoods. They also show that while some of the activities in which they become involved are illegal, many more are not.

In order to make the best use of scarce resources, several of the interviewees made do with and used what they had, prioritised and budgeted, and spent money on their needs rather than on their wants.

*"Is that we have so must make it do."*

*"I go with what it can give and try to manage it."*

*"Do without when I don't have."*

*"Use what I have wisely."*

*"Live within my means."*

*"Concentrate on needs and leave wants."*

*"Budget and prioritise, learn to leave out some things."*

*"Juggle the bills, pay some and leave some."*

*"Squeeze and stretch it."*

*"Pinch it little by little."*

*"Not enough but you stretch it."*

Others credited, depended on social assistance and help from others and organised income-generating activities.

*"Credit from the shop and pay when I get a little money."*

*"Remittances"*

*"Welfare."*

*"Take help as it comes."*

*"Friends give me sometimes."*

*"I applied for help but was unsuccessful."*

*"I does do barbecue and sell clothes."*

A few did admit that they were engaged in illegal activities, including gambling, crime, and selling of drugs.

*"Sell wrappers and cigarettes."*

*"I does gamble."*

*"Alcohol."*

*"Crime, it does pay."*

*"I does sell drugs."*

At the same time while several said that they had accepted their situation, a few left it to God.

*"I take life as it comes."*

*"I adjust myself to my misery."*

*"I am satisfied with what I have."*

*"Is that we have so must make it do."*

*"If I get I eat, if not I stay like that."*

*"I try to cope."*

*"I can't do any better."*

*"Only God Knows."*

## 7.13 HOUSEHOLD POVERTY

During the interviews, heads of households were asked whether they considered themselves to be poor or not. However, while it was important to obtain their views on this, widely accepted objective indicators were also used to determine which of the households studied were poor or not.

Among these indicators were the type, size and condition of housing; the type and number of household assets and resources; the household economy, including number of household members employed and unemployed; sources and amount of household income; availability, access, use and quality of public facilities and services; and the quality of life and sense of well being enjoyed by household members.

As can be seen in the Table below, seventeen or almost half of the households were very poor, eleven were poor, ten were better off and one was rich. Just over seventy percent of all the households were therefore either very poor or poor. The multi-generational households and the single-person households were the poorest; twelve of the thirteen multi-generational and four of the elderly being either very poor or poor.

Table 7.2: Type of Household and Level of Poverty

Households	Very Poor	Poor	Better Off	Rich	Total
Nuclear	2	5	3	1	11
Single-parent female-headed	2	1	2	-	5
Extended	2	-	1	-	3
Multi-generational	8	4	1	-	13
Single person elderly	3	1	1	-	5
Sibling	-	-	2		2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>39</b>

The data show that living conditions in poor and very poor households are worse than those of better off or rich households, thus members of poor households live in worse

conditions than their better off or rich counterparts. Their houses are usually in disrepair, have few, if any amenities, more household members are unemployed or underemployed and working for low wages and they have few assets and limited access to financial resources.

### 7.13.1 PERCEPTION, EXPERIENCE, EFFECT AND IMPACT OF POVERTY

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All of the interviewees understood what poverty is, what it means and how it affects them and impacts on their lives. For some poverty meant having nothing, not having a job, not being able to eat, inability to afford things that they wanted, and being unable to provide for themselves and their children.

*"Poverty is when you have nothing."*

*"When you can't provide for yourself and your children."*

*"Can't meet daily needs."*

*"Don't know where the next meal is coming from."*

*"No place to live."*

*"No income."*

*"Can't meet basic needs, much less other needs."*

Others believed that poverty places you in a situation from which it is difficult to emerge and so you have to suffer.

*"I am in deep poverty."*

*"I living in semi-poverty."*

*"Can't support or help yourself."*

*"When you have no place to live."*

*"Don't have what you need."*

*"Not able to do the things you want."*

*"Got nothing in case of emergencies."*

*"I don't like my situation."*

Thirty of the thirty-nine interviewees said that they were poor. Some of them commented on the level and severity of their poverty as well as on the difference between absolute and relative poverty.

*"I am poor, I living hand to mouth."*

*"I am poor, I have no money and nothing in my house."*

*"I have no house or anything."*

*"I am a poor person, I haven't got anything."*

*"I too poor, I don't like it."*

*"I am really poor."*

*"As I get older I get poorer."*

*"How come I poor so?"*

*"I poor, but not poor, poor."*

*"I am not rich but I am not the poorest."*

*"I not rich, but I not poor people in the area worst."*

When asked what or who was responsible for their being poor, interviewees mentioned several things including:

- ***Inherited poverty***

Information provided by several of the interviewees highlights the existence of chronic poverty over generations of families. Twenty-seven of the interviewees said that they had come from a poor family and many of them described the conditions under and within which they had grown up, and identified the factors that had contributed to their situation. Among the latter were poor parents, mainly mothers either unemployed or working in low-paying jobs, with few resources, but who had large numbers of children for whom to provide with little support from their fathers.

*"My parents couldn't afford, they didn't have enough money."*

*"Mother wasn't working anywhere."*

*"They didn't have anything."*

*"We were very poor not much to live on."*

*"Mother had a lot of children and couldn't look after them."*

*"Mother raises us alone and she died young."*

*"Mother wasn't working."*

*"Eleven children, small house, no income."*

*"We lived in a trash house."*

*"The family was always poor."*

*"They struggled to live."*

*"Never had a father, father left us, left my mother."*

- ***Early responsibilities.***

This included having to care for parents and for large numbers of children.

*"My mistake. I had children young."*

*"I make too many children."*

*"Myself for making a lot of children and can't support them."*

*"If I didn't have so many children things would be better."*

*"I had to care for my mother, so couldn't work."*

*"Mother was paralysed and I had to do everything for her."*

- ***Having always lived in poverty***

Some interviewees had always been impoverished and had never known or lived in any other situation than in poverty.

*"Things have always been difficult."*

*"You come and see it so."*

*"Since I know myself I working for people for food."*

- ***Lack of financial and other support***

Several interviewees believed that lack of jobs, money, and resources, the economy and lack of support from family members and spouses had contributed to their poverty.

*"The economy."*

*"Government upset my plans."*

*"Lack of resources"*

*"No job no-one to help me."*

*"My boyfriend don't give me any money."*

*"No-one to help me."*

*"Family could not assist."*

*"If my husband had worked we could have things."*

*"My husband drinks and is lazy."*

- ***Lack of educational and other opportunities***

Some of the interviewees recognised that low level of education and other opportunities had also contributed to their family's poverty as well as to their own.

*"Lack of opportunities and education."*

*"They born poor and lacked education and resources to better themselves."*

*"Mother didn't go to school."*

*"Having to care for the children I missed many opportunities."*

*"My family could not afford to provide me with education."*

One interviewee who had come from a poor family but who was now better-off, provided information that showed the importance of self-motivation and determination and of the role that education could play in helping individuals to overcome poverty.

*"I never wanted to remain poor so when I left school I started to work. I went to Martinique to look for a job. Then I went to Cuba and was in the Liberation Youth Arm. I did courses in Political Science and Economics at the University of Havana. I now own my own business and am doing well."*

Information provided by interviewees shows the effects of poverty and its impact on them and their lives. According to them poverty makes them have negative feelings, it affects their self-esteem and sense of self worth, it exposes them to ridicule, discrimination and social exclusion. Poverty also prevents them from being able to provide for their families and as a result affects their relationships and their ability to do and achieve the things that they would like accomplish.

Poverty made some interviewees feel sad, depressed, frustrated, embarrassed and unhappy and it made others feel like less of a person.

*"I don't feel good when I see other people have and I don't have."*

*"I am depressed and frustrated."*

*"I not happy."*

*"I am sad. I feel sad but I don't cry."*

*"I uncomfortable."*

*"I am a man who never was, since I know myself I never was."*

*"I feel like a beggar."*

*"Look down on myself when compared to others."*

*"My mind never in peace."*

Several interviewees said that they were treated differently because they were poor. They were taken advantage of, they were ridiculed and insulted, harassed, and excluded from social activities in their communities.

*"They look down on me."*

*"They low rate you."*

*"They lie on you."*

*"People take advantage of me."*

*"They don't give me a fair wage because they know I have to come back tomorrow."*

*"Unfair treatment, other people who don't need it as much get help from government."*

*"They tell my children things like you don't have nothing and will never have nothing."*

*"We not included in anything."*

*"They feel you not in their class."*

*"No respect, harassment."*

*"Verbal abuse."*

Many of those who were interviewed were unable to provide for or meet the basic needs of members of their households and this sometimes caused poor parent child relationships and poor relationships between partners.

*"I not working I can't provide for the children, can't give them everything they need."*

*"The children angry because you cannot provide what they want."*

*"They feel bad when they see me suffering."*

*"I cry when I cannot buy things for them."*

*"My partner always sick and we can't manage."*

*"I can't depend on him for help so we does quarrel sometimes."*

*"No money, the relationship bad."*

The data show that interviewees and their families were suffering from a number of illnesses and diseases, and that poverty was preventing several from being able to achieve and maintain good health. Several adults – seven males and twelve females, were suffering from diabetes and/or hypertension, and a small number had arthritis, heart problems, stroke or cancer. However, more significant numbers of the adults, especially the females were suffering from anxiety, stress, and depression. Children in the households studied were suffering from respiratory diseases including allergies, sinusitis and asthma, some had skin rashes and one had sickle cell disease.

A healthy diet, regular and high quality health care and access to treatment and relevant medication are essential for the achieving and maintaining good health. However the data show that because of poverty, the majority of interviewees were unable to provide enough or the right kind of food needed to maintain good bodily health, and almost half of the interviewees said that they only ate a balanced meal occasionally. At the same time the data show that while several of those interviewed were suffering from a number of illnesses and diseases, because of poverty they were also unable to obtain or to pay for the treatment or medication that they needed.

*"My hand painful, I need \$1800 to fix it but can't afford it."*

*"I need an MRI but can't afford."*

*"I can't afford the medication."*

*"Can't take a yearly check up."*

Those, many of whom were females, who had the burden of providing for family members on scarce resources said that they suffered from stress, anxiety and depression. Fifteen of the female interviewees said that they either suffered from anxiety or depression and fifteen interviewees suffered from hypertension.

*"It giving me pressure."*

*"I stress."*

*"My head does get hot, it always heavy."*

*"I can't sleep at night."*

They were anxious and worried about several things including the following:

*"The burden of my responsibilities."*

*"The lack of money and no job."*

*"When they cut the light."*

*"I worry about food shelter and health."*

*"I does worry about my sick husband and my son in gaol."*

While only fifteen, less than forty per cent of the interviewees believed that they would ever move out of poverty, two-thirds of them were optimistic and believed that their living conditions could or would improve.

According to the former, some of the things that would keep them in poverty were unemployment, lack of money, removal of support and assistance by children and welfare agencies, and illness. Consequently they believed that a job, money, good health, support from grown children and assistance from the Welfare Department would help them to move out of poverty.

Those who believed that their living conditions could and would improve were not only optimistic, they realised that it would not happen overnight, that they could not do it alone, and they stressed, among other things, the important role that assistance would have to play for this to happen.

*"You have to have hope, get a job, money and piece by piece fix the house."*

*"I live in hope that someday things will be better."*

*"As time goes by things will improve."*

*"It would take a long time."*

*"Maybe in the future."*

*"One day little by little."*

*"If I get a job."*

*"If I was employed to get enough money, things would get better."*

*"If I can save."*

*"When my house is complete and I can get more furniture."*

*"I can't manage my situation alone."*

*"If I get help to build my home."*

*"I cannot help myself to do what I want."*

These comments made by interviewees are evidence that although they were impoverished and obliged to live in unacceptable conditions, like all people they wanted a better life and they had a desire to improve the conditions in which they lived. However while many were willing to make the effort to improve their lives, because of their circumstances, they were unable to do so on their own and they acknowledged that they need assistance. While there is need for assistance with tangible things like jobs, money, better housing, education and skills training, the data suggest that there is also an essential need for assistance to promote, encourage and facilitate the acquisition of self-esteem and self-confidence, empowerment, and self-reliance.

In addition the data also show that attention must be paid to the special needs of older individuals who are poor, some of whom are living in deplorable conditions. Because of their age some of these interviewees were unable to work or provide for themselves and they not only feel helpless and powerless but abandoned.

*"At my age I can't do much."*

*"Staying in the same situation."*

*"I need someone to take care of me."*

*"With God's help."*

## **7.14 SENSE OF WELL BEING AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

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Achievement of a sense of well being and enjoying a good quality of life depends on more than having access to financial and material resources. All of the interviewees not only were aware of this but identified a number of other things that were necessary for anyone to be able to achieve these. However, while they all wished to have a sense of well being and to enjoy a good standard of living, because of their circumstances many were actually experiencing various states of "ill being."

Quality of life and a sense of well being have material as well as psychological, emotional, and spiritual dimensions that reflect the richness or otherwise of people's lives. They describe how life has progressed materially and people's level of satisfaction with the material dimension of their reality. At the same time the psychological and emotional dimensions of a good quality of life and of a sense of well being include high self-esteem, positive feelings, good relationships, a sense of belonging, a sense of

purpose, opportunities to realise potential and to be involved in societal processes, and a sense of achievement and fulfillment. Achievement of aspirations and goals also contributes to a sense of well being.

While the interviewees stressed the material dimension, including the need for jobs and money to be able to enjoy a good standard of life and a good quality of life, they were handicapped by their poverty and by the lack of the type and amount of economic and material resources that they needed to be able to achieve this. As a result, twenty-four of the interviewees not only said that they were dissatisfied with their standard of living and with the quality of their lives, but they explained why.

*"I not satisfied with how I live."*

*"The way I living in bad conditions."*

*"The way I moving in poverty."*

*"Being unemployed."*

*"Things not good."*

*"Changes needed in the quality of my life."*

*"I missing a lot of different things."*

At the same time they identified things that in their view were necessary to achieve a sense of well being, and it is important to note that these were related to spiritual, psychological, and emotional well being.

- Faith in God;
- Moral standards;
- Positive attitudes;
- Self respect and self-esteem;
- Good family life;
- Good relationships;
- Appreciation by others;
- Support from family and friends;
- Unity;
- Peace of mind;
- Happiness;
- Absence of problems;
- Absence of domestic abuse and violence;
- Good health.

In addition to these, achievement of a sense of well being also depends on the extent to which people are able to achieve their dreams, aspirations, and goals and the data show that interviewees, like every other person had several of these. Some dreamed of living in better conditions and having a better life, some of furthering their children's education as well as their own, to own their own business, to retire and to travel. However because of their poverty most had been unable to realise any of their dreams or to achieve any of their goals.

Fifteen of the interviewees who said that they were satisfied with the quality of their lives and their sense of well being said that they lived a good life, were able to meet their basic needs and had achieved most of what they had wanted.

### **7.15 HOUSEHOLD PROBLEMS AND NEEDS**

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Information provided during interviews by heads of households and/or by other adults in the households studied provide empirical data that highlight the many challenges and problems that heads of households face as they attempt to meet the basic needs of their families and to maintain their households. All of the interviewees identified a number of problems they faced and several things that they needed to be able to maintain their households. The majority said that they were unable to provide their families with the basic needs of food and shelter on a regular basis, and many were also unable to effectively meet educational and health needs, and/or psychological and emotional needs. .

The major problem facing heads of households was the lack of money and of sufficient money to be able to provide basic needs of food and shelter for members of the household. Over two-thirds of the interviewees identified insufficient money as the most serious problem and as the most urgent need, and an equivalent number identified inadequate housing as the next most serious problem and the next most urgent need. Twenty-three interviewees said that lack of jobs was a serious problem and an urgent need, and sixteen said that insufficient food was a serious problem and an urgent need.

## SECTION 8: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

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Activities conducted during the PPA generated a large amount of qualitative data that increase understanding of the types and levels of poverty that exist in Dominica, and of the factors that contribute to its existence and reinforce and perpetuate it. The information provided by those who participated in the various PPA activities has not only increased understanding of what it means to be poor and to live in impoverished conditions, but draws attention to the negative outcomes of poverty and to its impact on individuals, groups, households and communities.

While analysis of the data does reveal some of the initiatives that have been taken to improve living conditions, they also raise a number of key issues that have emerged and must be addressed in order to ensure that poverty reduction initiatives can actually improve living conditions of those who are impoverished and that they will contribute to poverty alleviation and reduction.

Analysis of the qualitative data obtained from participants in various PPA activities highlights and draws attention to:

- The types, levels, and severity of poverty that exist in the communities studied and to some of the factors that contribute to these, as well as to some of the initiatives that have been taken to improve living conditions and alleviate poverty.
- Dependency of the poor on public facilities and services.
- The existence of vulnerable groups and the ways in which poverty impacts on them.

### 8.1 POVERTY

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Those who live in poverty are aware and understand that it is multi-dimensional, that it means being deprived of essential things, and that deprivation affects all aspects of their lives in negative ways. However, while they see deprivation of basic needs as a threat to their survival, they are also aware that other things of which they are deprived also contribute to their impoverished condition. Any attempts to address the issue of poverty and to alleviate it must therefore be based on an understanding of all of its dimensions and of how each one interacts to impact negatively on the lives of those who are poor.

At the same time they understand that social, psychological and emotional dimensions of poverty diminishes their self-esteem, increase their dependency on others and their feelings of powerlessness, and decrease their ability to improve their situation or to move out of poverty.

The data show that all of the communities studied displayed characteristics of poverty that ranged from severe to moderate, that over seventy per cent of the households in these communities were either very poor or poor, and that only eleven were better off. They also show the existence of chronic, inherited, inter-generational poverty and of its effects on successive generations. Several household heads admitted that their parents were poor; they identified factors that had contributed to their parents' poverty and they shared experiences of living in poverty during their childhoods. Several were also of the view that growing up in poor households had contributed to their current state of poverty.

Residents in all of the communities identified lack of money and of jobs as the main causes of their poverty, but they also identified other things that are responsible for their impoverished state. Among these are poor housing and unacceptable living conditions, lack of assets and resources, low levels of education, lack of marketable skills, and limited access to facilities and services.

Participants were adamant that poverty alleviation initiatives must provide opportunities for them to improve their financial status by providing job opportunities and more jobs. However, while this is necessary in the short as well as in the long term, it is also essential that poverty alleviation initiatives pay much more attention to the social, psychological and emotional dimensions of poverty and to the factors that reinforce and perpetuate this phenomenon. This will entail providing opportunities and programmes through which poor individuals can develop themselves, acquire the confidence and skills, and become empowered and self-reliant.

Any attempts to address the issue of poverty and to alleviate it must therefore consider all of its dimensions and be based on an understanding of how each impacts on the lives of those who are impoverished.

### **8.1.1 THE ECONOMIC DIMENSION**

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The dimension of poverty with which most people who participated in the PPA activities were concerned is the economic dimension, and they linked this to the fundamental cause of their poverty. Unemployment, lack of access to financial resources and lack of money prevents them from meeting even their basic needs and are major factors that contribute to their poverty.

Ownership of assets and access to resources, including to financial resources, enables individuals and households to maintain a good standard of living and increases their ability to effectively respond to shocks and crises. While the majority of those who participated in the PPA activities said that money was the most important asset, the data

show that for most of them, money was scarce and because of this many were unable to access several other important resources that they needed, including food.

Food is not only a basic need but it is also an essential resource. However, several heads of households and many of those who participated in focus group discussions said that lack of money had limited their ability to provide enough and/or the right kind of food for their families, including for their children. The food security of their households is therefore threatened and lack of food has serious implications, especially for the health of children and elderly persons.

### **8.1.2 THE MATERIAL DIMENSION**

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In addition to financial resources and enough money to be able to provide for their basic need for food, people also need adequate shelter. However the data show that while several people owned the house in which they lived, in many of the communities inadequate housing was a very serious problem. This was not only evident in the materials used for construction, in the state of disrepair, in the small size, and lack of space causing overcrowding, but also in the absence of basic amenities, especially toilets and bathrooms.

These conditions not only threatened the safety of inhabitants but also had serious implications for personal and environmental health. This was especially so in communities where in the absence of toilets some residents defecated in and disposed of faeces in the bush, in gullies, in rivers and in the sea. At the same time while there was evidence of attempts to address and improve housing conditions through the “housing revolution,” data from the PPA suggest that much more will have to be done to deal with unfavourable housing conditions and to ensure that people’s basic need for adequate shelter will be met. In addition, serious attempts must be made to ensure that in the absence of private bathroom and toilet facilities, all residents have access to public toilet and bathroom facilities.

### **8.1.2 THE SOCIAL DIMENSION**

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Two important issues that must be considered when examining the social dimension of poverty are education and the social problems.

#### **8.1.2.1 Education**

Practically all of those who participated in PPA activities understood the important role of education and believed that low levels of education contributed to poverty and that

education was the key for helping people to move out of poverty. However the data show that a large number of the heads of households only had primary education, and that while a few of the household heads had been to secondary school many had not completed their secondary education or received any certificates. By their own admission, nearly ninety percent of the household heads said that they were either illiterate or functionally illiterate, and while some of these might have been older persons and might have been literate in Creole, this finding suggests that greater efforts must be made not only to improve the level of education, but the level of literacy in English among the adult population. These findings highlight the need not only to improve the level of education among the adult population but also to increase efforts to improve their level of literacy in English.

At the same time the data show that few if any of those who participated in the PPA activities were participating in any adult education programmes. This was so even for some people who were desirous of continuing their education but who were unable to do so because of lack of money to pay for courses, absence of programmes in their communities or lack of child care facilities, or because they had to work. It will therefore be important to increase the number, type, and scope of adult and continuing education programmes, to adopt strategies to motivate people to participate in these programmes, and to provide financial and other support that would be enable various groups of adults to participate in and benefit from programmes that are being offered.

On the other hand many respondents were hoping that through education their children would be able to move out of poverty and have a better life. However while they acknowledged there had been an increase in formal education for children and young people, several parents and grandparents were concerned that because of poverty, they were not always able to provide their children with lunch, school books or materials or with transportation when needed and therefore they could not benefit from the education that was being provided. At the same time, while they recognised the value of further and higher education several said that they did not have the money to allow their children to further their education. As a result they identified the need for more scholarships, especially to poor children.

### **8.1.2.2 Social Problems**

Analysis of the data highlights the social dimension of poverty and the critical role that the social environment plays on people's ability to enjoy a sense of well being. The data not only show that there are several serious social problems in all of the communities that were studied, but that these contribute to as well as are consequences of poverty. Several respondents were of the view that there was a link between crime, violence, drug trafficking, gangs and prostitution and poverty, and some said that in the absence

of meaningful employment and well paid jobs some of these activities provided their only means of survival.

### **8.1.3 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL DIMENSION**

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The data show that while many of those who participated in the PPA activities owned few material assets, they had other assets, including the skills that they used to survive, about which they are unaware and that they used a number of these skills to enable them to function and to maintain their households. They were creative and skilled in using a number of different strategies and they identified and made maximum use of scarce resources. They also used their mental and social capital to build relationships with others and to cooperate and support each other. This is evident from the way in which people in several communities assisted each other and shared resources like foodstuff. While residents did not always regard these as assets, the way in which they have used these has helped them to survive and to sustain their livelihoods.

Living in poverty and frustrated with their inability to cope had robbed some participants of their self-esteem, and had caused others to feel impotent and powerless to do anything to change their situation. In one case poverty had had such a devastating and dehumanizing effect as to make the individual believe that he “never was” a person.

## **8.2 POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

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There is some evidence that government and a few civil society organizations have implemented several programmes, projects, and activities designed to alleviate poverty. In spite of this, several people in the communities studied either said that they were unaware of such initiatives or that they had not benefited from any of them. This could be because some or projects, programmes and projects were not specifically identified as poverty alleviation initiatives, and that projects and programmes were not specifically targeted to the poor nor based on their particular needs.

Poverty alleviation initiatives must be based on an understanding of the many dimensions of poverty and on the needs of those who are impoverished. Failure to base poverty alleviation programmes and projects the specific needs of community residents and on the particular needs of those who are poor will mean that such programmes would have little chance of improving the living conditions in communities or of helping those who are poor to move out of poverty. It is not only important to link poverty alleviation programmes and projects to findings of Country Poverty

Assessments, but it is critical to take steps to inform community residents of intended programmes and projects, to provide opportunities for them to identify their needs and to involve them in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluating of programmes and projects that are intended to benefit them.

### **8.3 DEPENDENCY ON PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

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In the absence of sufficient assets and limited access to resources, many poor individuals and households rely on and use government facilities and services. The facilities are vehicles through which services are provided and programmes implemented to provide assistance and support to community residents who are in need. However even when such facilities and services exist, the extent to which residents can access and use them depends on distance, on hours and time of delivery, on cost, and on the quality of the service and attitude of providers.

The data show that not all of the communities studied were well served with facilities and services and that significant numbers of people in the communities studied depend on the social services for their survival. Health centres, community centres and recreational facilities are available in only a few of the communities and some of the other social services are only available in Roseau.

Community centres are places where residents can meet to socialise and engage in a variety of activities, and resource centres with computers provide opportunities for students to increase the knowledge and skills they need to enhance their school work and to improve their performance. There can also provide resources and opportunities for adults to continue their education, but there are community/resource centres in only four of the communities studied. Given the low levels of education of most of the residents and heads of households interviewed, it is important that some provision be made to provide facilities like community and resource centres in all of the communities, organise educational programmes and other activities, and to motivate and encourage residents to participate in these.

The majority of people in many of the communities studied are unable to afford private health care so they depend on the services provided by health clinics and in the hospital. However, while some of them said that the services provided were either good or at an acceptable standard, several others complained about long waiting hours, about the absence and irregular visits by doctors, about poor service and the negative attitudes of health professionals, and about unavailability of vital medication. Consequently even although public health services were provided either gratis or at very low cost, some poor individuals were unable to benefit fully from them. It is therefore important that

free health care be made available to the very poor, steps be made to improve its quality and that medication be made available free of cost, especially to the very poor and the elderly.

Another major concern raised by many respondents was the poor attitudes of some health professionals and the sometimes seemingly callous and inhumane ways in which they dealt with those who are obliged to depend on the government services for their health care. However these concerns were not only limited to the health services because the data also show that there is also a high level of dependency on social welfare especially for monetary assistance, including pensions, from the Welfare Department. On many occasions during PPA activities recipients of social assistance not only commented on the small amounts received and their inability to enable them to meet even basic needs, but they also shared experiences of being discriminated against, ridiculed and insulted by officials in the Welfare Department and other government agencies.

Government has invested a significant amount of resources to provide facilities in communities and to provide services that are intended to improve living conditions and to meet some of the needs of the poorest residents in various communities. However the data suggest that in many of the communities studied facilities and services were either few or insufficient, that residents were often unable to access and benefit from them. A significant number of respondents were also dissatisfied with services as well as with the attitudes of the service providers. It would therefore be important and useful to do an assessment of existing facilities and services and to get residents' views about their expectations as well as their ideas for improvement. At the same time, if the quality of some of the services is to improve, a determined effort must be made through training and other sensitisation programmes to improve existing attitudes of those personnel who are responsible for delivering them.

## **8.4 VULNERABLE GROUPS**

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Analysis of information obtained during all PPA activities indicates that some groups in poor communities are more vulnerable than others. The data provides evidence that children, female single parents, the elderly, and people with disabilities are the most vulnerable.

### 8.4.1 CHILDREN

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There are a significant number of children living in poor households and practically everyone who participated in the various activities agreed that children were the ones most affected by poverty. Several parents and grandparents were concerned about their inability to provide food for their children and to ensure that they can pursue and benefit from available educational opportunities and can attain further and higher education.

Several respondents identified and commented on the negative effects of poverty on all aspects of children's lives including their level of nutrition, their education, delinquency and indiscipline, their involvement in gangs and illegal activities, and on their vulnerability to exploitation through incest, child abuse and teenage pregnancies. While these problems do not only affect poor children or children who live in poor communities like some of those that were studied, the data did reveal several instances of them in the communities that were studied. The data also revealed the concern of parents, grandparents and other adults in the communities about the vulnerability of children.

Several interviewees admitted that because of poverty they were unable to provide enough of the right kind of food for their children, and that although they recognised the importance of education for moving out of poverty, because of poverty they could not afford to allow their children to take advantage of opportunities to further their education.

Drug trafficking and use were identified as problems in all of the communities studied and several respondents were concerned about the involvement of some poor children in these and other illegal activities. Some were also concerned that poverty left children open to exploitation, especially if they had to beg or depend on unscrupulous adults. Moreover their concerns were justified as the data produced some evidence of child neglect, incest and abuse, and teenage pregnancy.

Information provided by some interviewees suggests that teenage pregnancy can contribute to as well as result from poverty. Teenage pregnancy was identified as a serious problem in ten of the twelve communities studied and the information obtained suggests that some teenage mothers were under the age of consent. The data also show that several of the female heads of households had had their first child during their teens and that many of them had had to leave school as a result.

Having sex with girls under the age of consent is statutory rape and is regarded as a crime, but during the PPA no evidence was provided to show that any of the men who had impregnated young girls had been charged with statutory rape.

It is also well recognised that teenage pregnancies and premature motherhood can be injurious to children's health and can prevent girls from pursuing and/or completing their formal education. The issue of teenage pregnancy has many implications for the future of young girls as well as for that of the society as a whole. It is therefore one that must be taken seriously and be addressed at the national level.

Because children are the future of any society it is extremely important to be aware of the kinds of experiences that are contributing to their development and shaping the kind of adults that they will become. It is therefore essential to carefully examine the reality of children, especially of children who are living in poor households and experiencing the many negative effects of poverty and to take deliberate steps not only to lessen their vulnerability but to change the conditions in which they are living and to provide the type and level of support that is necessary to improve their lives.

#### **8.4.2 WOMEN WHO ARE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WELFARE OF THEIR FAMILIES**

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Through gender socialization women are taught and a significant number therefore believe that a relationship with and dependency on a man is essential for their survival. However the data show that significant numbers of women who are single parents and who are heads of multi-generational households are solely responsible for the welfare of their families.

The data show that many of these women had only primary education and few marketable skills, so that they are either unemployed or underemployed and working for very low wages. However, even though they do not have enough money they are solely responsible for providing for their families and for maintaining their homes. Many of these women are vulnerable because they are sometimes forced to engage in activities that put them at risk and contribute to their exploitation and abuse.

One of the survival strategies used by some women is to request financial assistance from men; and the data show that several of the female heads of households had children for more than one man. Another survival strategy used by some women is prostitution, and while all of the women who were interviewed or who participated in focus group discussions realised that engaging in this activity put them at risk of contracting STIs or HIV/AIDS, some did admit that they sometimes had to engage in transactional sex.

Research has shown that even if some women who are heads of household are working, their wages are insufficient to meet their basic needs and those of their children, much less to pull their households out of poverty. Such women therefore need a great deal of

assistance; information obtained during the PPA show that while some women did receive some assistance with school books and uniforms, many others did not. Many poor women who are solely responsible for meeting the needs of their families, are unable to provide other things, like clothes, enough food or the nutritious meals that their children need.

While it is necessary to provide some assistance to these women, this is a short-term measure, and a more long-term strategy is needed. One such strategy is to provide opportunities for poor women to improve their education and to acquire skills that they can use either to obtain employment or to become self-employed.

### **8.4.3 THE ELDERLY**

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Poverty has several negative effects on elderly persons, many of whom are too old to be employed, or to work to sustain their livelihoods. Several therefore have to depend on their children, on other relatives, on pensions or other assistance from the Welfare Department. While assistance from these sources was welcomed, it was often irregular and insufficient to allow them to meet even their most basic needs.

The data show that the health of elderly persons is seriously affected by poverty. This is so because many of them were diabetic, and/or suffered from hypertension and other diseases that required them to use medication on a regular basis. However because they were unable to afford private health care or to purchase medication from public pharmacies, they depended on public health services; according to them, however, sometimes the clinics did not have the medication that they needed. As a result some had to do without medication and this put them at risk and compromised their health.

Many elderly people who live alone also did not receive the type and quality of care that they needed and they felt abandoned. However, there were few if any activities specifically designed to provide opportunities for elderly persons interact with their peers and to engage in activities in which they were interested.

### **8.4.4 PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

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During interviews with household heads it was discovered that there were persons with disabilities in fifteen of the households that were studied. In most cases household heads or other household members were responsible for providing care for those who have a disability. However, since the heads of some of these households were scarcely able to meet basic needs they were not in a position to provide those household members who

have a disability with either the type or quality of care that they needed. The majority of heads of household in which there were persons with disabilities said that they did not receive assistance needed to provide the required care.

Persons who participated in the focus group discussion with persons with disabilities and other interested persons also identified the absence of and emphasised the need for institutions, mechanisms, programmes and material and financial assistance to persons with disabilities and their families.

People with disabilities have the same rights to decent living conditions, to a good quality of life and to all societal benefits as received by those who are not physically or mentally challenged. Moreover special attention must be paid to those persons who have a disability and who are also poor. Government as well as the relevant NGOs must therefore acquaint themselves with the particular needs of such persons. They must do much more to ensure that they receive the care and attention they need, and that they can be well equipped, as far as possible, to participate in and benefit from all societal processes.

## **8.5 SOME KEY ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED**

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### **8.5.1 ECONOMIC ISSUES**

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The economies of the majority of households that were studied were very fragile and the financial resources of many households and individuals were either non-existent or insufficient for them to meet basic needs. The data show that in the majority of households adult members were either unemployed or underemployed and worked for low wages. In a small number of the households no adult was employed.

While absence of job opportunities and of jobs were contributing to poverty, low levels of education and lack of marketable skills were also responsible for unemployment and underemployment, and the data highlight the link between level of education, employment and household economy. Information provided by individuals and groups show low levels of education of household heads, the majority of whom have only primary education, as well as among unemployed persons and youth – the majority of whom had not completed secondary school or had not attended technical and vocational or skills training programmes. Such persons are therefore unable to obtain permanent or well paid jobs and to contribute in any substantial way to the economy of their households.

As a result some people either remained unemployed or engaged in diverse income-earning activities in the informal sector and sometimes in the underground economy. In

the absence of other job opportunities, several respondents saw such activities as their only options. However, while activities in the informal sector and in the underground economy do provide some income that allows people to survive and to be able to buy food and pay some of their bills, the money that they generate is usually still insufficient to pull poor households out of poverty.

There is also a link between household income and the level of deprivation experienced by household members, and between their inability to meet their basic needs and to enjoy an acceptable standard of living and a good quality life. While this has implications for all household members, because of lack of scarce financial resources the development and welfare of children in poor households is seriously affected and their life chances compromised. The data show that in some poor households children were deprived of enough or the right kind of food and of adequate health care, and were unable to benefit fully from educational opportunities that were available.

In the absence of regular wages the data show that a significant number of poor individuals and households depended on social welfare and on the small amounts of money, including pensions, provided by the Welfare Department, as well as on some NGOs for assistance with food, clothes and other necessities. A few people also depended on remittances from relatives and friends at home and abroad. However, because of small amounts received from the former and irregularity of the latter, several of the recipients were still not able to meet their basic needs or to enjoy an acceptable standard of living.

The majority of those who participated in PPA activities said that their most urgent needs were money, food and jobs and many saw opportunities to be employed and to earn money as critical for their survival. The information that they provided draws attention to the serious effects and the impact that lack of financial resources has on households and individuals living in poverty. This suggests that there is an urgent need for government to address the issue of unemployment and underemployment, to create and increase job opportunities and more jobs, including jobs that offer better wages. At the same time it is necessary to provide programmes that would equip poor individuals with marketable skills so that they would be better able to make use of employment opportunities that may exist.

### **8.5.2 SOCIAL ISSUES**

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The social life of individuals, families and groups is important to their quality of life and sense of well being, but the data show that poverty affects this aspect of their lives in many negative ways. It affects their family life and their relationships as well as their ability to enjoy leisure and entertainment.

### **8.5.2.1 Family Life**

Several people pointed to what they called the breakdown in family life. The data revealed that in some of the households studied male-female relationships and parent-child relationships were not harmonious and were characterized by quarrels, disagreements, arguments, conflict and violence. Information obtained during PPA activities suggests that poverty also played a role in and contributed to a deterioration in morals and the existence of poor and negative attitudes. According to some respondents these phenomena were triggered by people's frustration at their inability to provide and to receive things they expected or they would have liked.

The type and quality of relationship between partners, between parents and children and between young and older persons were areas of concern for many, some of whom were of the view that poverty and the behaviours of some adults contributed to the existence of delinquent children, and of young people who show little if any respect for older persons.

### **8.5.2.2 Social Problems**

Residents in all of the communities identified a number of social problems that were affecting people and preventing them from enjoying sense of well being. One of the major problems in all of the communities was the use and abuse of drugs even among some children. Alcoholism is also a problem in most of the communities and in a few cases it contributed to domestic violence. Criminal activity, while mostly seen as petty crime and theft was also a matter of concern in eight of the twelve communities. While involvement in drug trafficking and crime were being seen as survival strategies and as opportunities to obtain income, they have serious consequences not for those who engage in them, but also on households, families and on the communities as a whole. Teenage pregnancy was also identified as a serious problem in ten communities and related to this was evidence of child neglect and abuse, including incest, in some communities.

Residents in all of the communities identified and were concerned about the social problems that existed in their communities. However, little if any evidence emerged during PPA activities that showed that either government or civil society organizations had implemented or were implementing the number or types of programmes that were needed to prevent these problems or to remedy the negative outcomes and impact of the problems.

The existence of social problems in a community creates a social environment in which residents may not always feel safe and may live in fear. At the same time such an environment is not conducive to nor does it facilitate harmonious relationships built on trust and mutual respect. While a great deal of attention is usually placed on the

economic dimension of poverty, more attention need to be placed on its social dimension environment and greater efforts made to understand how and why the social environment in which people live contributes to and perpetuates poverty.

### **8.5.2.3 Education**

It is widely recognised that there is a link between people's level of education and the possibility of their being poor. Everyone who took part in the PPA activities also agreed that education was important and was the key to moving out of poverty. Consequently even those who had very little education wanted to ensure that their children and grandchildren received a good education so that they could move out of poverty and not be condemned to living in poverty.

They were all also aware that over the years educational opportunities have increased and that education at all levels was now more readily available. However, the data show that although parents did try to send their children to school every day, several children living in poor households were still unable to benefit from available educational opportunities. Failure of poor children to benefit from available educational opportunities not only limits their chances of obtaining gainful employment on leaving school, but it also curtails their personal development, limits their life chances, and condemns them to a life of poverty,

Some parents and grandparents admitted that their children often missed school because they were not always able to provide them with the amount of food and with nutritious meals, with lunch or lunch money, with school supplies and with transportation. Children from poor households were therefore at a disadvantage when they had to compete with their counterparts from non-poor households. At the same time several parents also admitted that their children either could not complete secondary education or pursue tertiary education because they lacked the financial resources to allow them to do so.

While the education of children is vitally important, continuing education of adults is equally so. It is adults who are heads of households and who are responsible for sustaining their own livelihoods and those of their families, and it is adults who must work to ensure that personal and national development goals will be achieved. However in order to do so, the adult population must be well educated and well equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills. However ,while the successful implementation and expected outcomes of the government's Strategy for Growth and Social Protection (2008) will depend on well educated and well equipped adults, very little mention was made in the document about the implementation of a comprehensive national adult education programme.

Through participation in adult education programmes, people's ability to critically assess their situation can be increased; they can be motivated, and they can acquire required skills and they can gain the confidence to take action to change their situations. However, the data show that few of those who participated in PPA activities are participating in adult education or literacy programmes. This in spite of the fact that the majority of heads of households who were interviewed have only a primary education and that several people admitted to being functionally illiterate.

This suggests that government as well as civil society organizations must pay more serious attention to role of adult education and that urgent steps be taken to develop and implement a comprehensive national adult education and literacy programme.

#### **8.5.2.4 Health**

Good health is essential if people are to enjoy a sense of well being but the data show that several people in the communities studied, especially those who are elderly, suffer from lifestyle diseases. According to the information, provided people's inability to eat nutritious meals on a regular basis had contributed to their poor health, and several respondents were unable to afford good health care and medication.

As a result the majority of those who participated in the PPA activities relied on the public health service for health care and to deal with their illnesses. However, some interviewees shared experiences that highlighted the inadequacies in the system including poor attitudes of some health professionals, the poor quality of services offered, and the absence of medication. While they expressed dissatisfaction with the services provided, because they were poor they could not afford to go to private doctors or to buy medication when it was not available from the clinic. As a result, sometimes they either did without medication or used bush medicines, but this jeopardized their health and put them at risk.

Analysis of the health-related data not only suggests that the public health systems may need to be reviewed and improved, but that serious steps must be taken to deal with the poor and unacceptable attitudes and behaviours of some health professionals.

### **8.5.3 EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES**

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This aspect of poverty is not usually given a great deal of attention; however many of those who participated in PPA activities provided information on the negative emotional and psychological impact of poverty and on the extent to which this affects their lives and influences their sense of well being.

They identified stress, anxiety and uncertainty at being unable to provide for their families, especially their children, and sadness and anger at being impoverished. They talked about being depressed and frustrated, about being anxious and stressed. Such feelings are indicative of an unhealthy emotional state.

For several people the psychological impact of poverty is also very traumatic because it dehumanises them, engenders feelings of worthlessness and undermines their self-esteem and self-confidence. During the PPA a significant number of people said that they felt like nobody, like non-persons, of no value and that their self-esteem was low. These feelings are exacerbated by the ways in which they are treated by some of their neighbours and by those who felt that they were better off than they were. At the same time, having to depend on others for their survival reinforced feelings of shame and embarrassment as well as helplessness and powerlessness, and some felt that their attempts to survive or to improve their conditions were futile. Some people also shared experiences of being discriminated against, of being treated unfairly and of being excluded from some social activities and processes.

People who suffer such psychological and emotional damage may need counselling and other professional help and a few people identified counselling as a need. However while the data suggest that the need for such help is not always recognised or readily available, it is important that it be and recognised and accepted as one of the strategies to address some of the negative effects of poverty.

Analysis of the data draws attention to the many negative ways in which poverty can affect people's emotional and psychological well being, and it highlights the need for more serious attention to be paid to this dimension of poverty. The data do not only suggest that those who have been damaged psychologically and emotionally may need some professional help but they also suggest that serious attention must be paid to removing some of the factors that are responsible for creating negative emotional and psychological states.

#### **8.5.4 GENDER ISSUES**

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It is now widely recognised that poverty is gendered because males and females become poor through different processes, and that they experience and are affected by poverty differently. Consequently while it is important to disaggregate data by sex and to obtain relevant quantitative data, these alone are insufficient to identify and examine the separate realities of males and females or to identify gender issues that must be addressed in order to ensure that poverty alleviation programmes will be based on the particular needs of poor females as well as of poor males. Qualitative data like those obtained during PPA activities are therefore not only essential but critical because they

increase understanding of and provide insights into the separate and different realities of poor males and of poor females.

Separate focus discussions with men and with women provided opportunities for them to reflect on their experience of being poor and to talk about the impact of poverty on their lives. The information that they provided show the links between gender and poverty. It also shows that although there are some similarities in the experiences of poor women and poor men, in how poverty affects them and in their survival strategies, that there are also significant differences. Their information also provided insights into gender discrimination, unequal distribution of power and the division of labour along gender lines within households, as well as the gender segmentation of the labour market.

Within many of the households studied, division of labour is along gender lines so that adult females are responsible for child care and for managing and maintaining the home. They, along with female children also do most of the household chores without the help of males. In some households male and female children do all types of chores, but in some others male children tended to do 'male' chores like sweep the yard and females do 'female' chores like cleaning the house, washing and cooking.

Analysis of the data provide concrete evidence that the labour market is segmented along gender lines because many of males are employed in construction and fishing or were doing jobs that were usually regarded as 'men's work', and that paid higher wages than jobs which are regarded as 'women's work' and that paid less. Employed females were working as domestics, as vendors or were braiding hair – low-skilled and low-paying activities.

While males and females employ different coping and survival strategies, both are sometimes obliged to become involved in activities that are illegal and that put them at risk. Males, especially young men, who depend on the drug trade and on criminal activities for their survival, are at risk. So too are females who engage in prostitution.

Poverty also determines whether and how males and females can perform their gender roles and responsibilities. The data show that both unemployed males and unemployed females conform to expected traditional gender roles, and that because of poverty both faced challenges and were often unable to fulfill these roles as is expected or as they would like. Males referred to their role as breadwinner and provider, and females accepted their role as nurturer and caregiver and placed emphasis on child care and home management.

At the same time while some poor men do accept their responsibilities and said that they try to provide for their families and their children, some are unable to do so because of poverty. Poor males consistently said that their inability to perform their gender roles emasculated them and made them feel less than men.

In the single-parent female-headed households and in some multi-generational households where there was no adult male, female heads of such households are forced to adopt the role of sole provider. Most of the women who participated in PPA activities shared experiences that show how adoption of this role was a burden that increased their vulnerability, and how poverty often prevented them from performing this added role as well as their traditional female roles with any degree of success.

Gender relations are based on and influenced by beliefs about masculinity and femininity and by societal expectations of male and female behaviour. The data show that poverty affects gender relations, sex and sexuality, mating patterns and fertility. While a significant number of heads of households said that they had no partner, marriage and visiting and common-law relationships existed in several of the households that were studied.

Information provided by some women show that in some relationships women are abused and subjected to violence. According to them, being poor or being in a relationship with a poor man can lead to arguments and disagreements about money, and while the latter often begin and end with verbal abuse they do sometimes lead to violence. Relationships between older men and young girls often result in teenage pregnancies and residents in many of the communities studied, view teenage pregnancy as a serious problem because teenage pregnancy not only affects girls' ability to complete or further their education, but has serious implications for their health.

Another gender issue that emerged from analysis of the data is mating patterns, fertility, and multiple pregnancies. The data show that several of the female heads of households interviewed had had relationships and mated with and had had children from several different males. While some women used this as a survival strategy the result was multiple pregnancies and large numbers of children for whom they were unable to adequately provide. Moreover in many cases these women did not receive any financial or emotional support from the fathers of their children, thus increasing their burden of being the sole provider.

Identification and recognition of gender issues are important in order to better understand the gendered nature of poverty and the different ways in which males and females experience, are affected by, and cope with poverty.

Moreover if poverty alleviation policies and programmes are to achieve their objectives of alleviating and reducing poverty, there must be a commitment to understand and address such gender issues as gender inequity, gender inequality and gender discrimination. To achieve this, it will be essential to conduct a gender analysis of poverty data generated by quantitative approaches like the Survey of Living Conditions as well as by the qualitative data generated by qualitative approaches like the Participatory Poverty Assessment.

In addition, to ensure that poverty alleviation programmes and projects are based on and are designed to meet the specific and particular needs of poor males and of poor females, pro-poor policies and programmes must take gender differences into consideration and be based on gender-specific data. At the same time, the gender sensitivity of policy makers and of those who develop and implement poverty alleviation programmes must be increased by exposing them to intensive and extensive gender training.

## **8.6 CONCLUSION**

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The suggestions made in this section of the report should be seen as broad recommendations on a number of issues that need to be addressed, and serious thought should be given to how to implement them.

## **PART II: THE INDEPTH INTERVIEWS**

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## **SECTION 9: DOMINICA IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS: LIVING IN INDIGENCE**

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The in-depth interviews with select poor households ask the respondent to provide a narrative of his/her life and how it is related to material deprivation. The interview has three main components: life history; the meaning of deprivation and finally the ways in which this has affected their life. At the end of the day we are left with an account of how that individual has constructed her/his reality. Ideally, the interview should take place on two or three occasions; in practice all three dimensions are explored in one extended interview. The interviews are conducted with the households that appear to be facing the greatest challenges to survive in the poorest communities in the country. In practical terms, these interviews tell us how people accommodate their lives to sharing a miniscule amount of the total wealth produced in the country. The stories tell of stark material insufficiency and its implications for the lives of these people. These interviews represent a stark portrayal of what it means in real terms to fall below the indigence line and obtain only a fraction of the share of total consumption enjoyed by the rest of the society. They tell of the strategies, mindsets and mechanisms of coping that accompany such insufficiencies.

### **9.1 MAIN THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE INTERVIEWS:**

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Hunger, intergenerational poverty, associated in all instances with broken relationships between men and women and multiple pregnancies; women in this situation are left with a sense of abandonment and hopelessness regarding the possibility of overcoming poverty; domestic abuse; social isolation and marginalization, unemployment, low levels of schooling, overcrowding in decrepit, dilapidated housing; some of the worst cases of deprivation seen in the region; in spite of this these poor women experience joy, pride and hope in their children; poverty in Dominica has a depressing quality about it that has not been noticed elsewhere. Extreme need evinced by respondents in the case study is accompanied by problems in their interface with the agencies responsible for addressing such needs.

## 9.2 CASE STUDY 1: SONIA, FORTY-ONE-YEAR-OLD SINGLE MOTHER OF SEVEN CHILDREN

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Central themes: Intergenerational poverty, unstable family and mating pattern, unemployment, limited access to the educational system on the part of the mother, hunger, fatalism and hopelessness, social service delivery failure.

**THE SETTING** – The interview was conducted in an economically and socially depressed community just outside Roseau. The respondent, Sonia is a 41 year old mother of seven children. She lives with them in what is known as a long house along with her mother and a cousin who is companion to her 14 year-old daughter. A long house is a series of joined wooden apartments. The houses and the community are in a state of dilapidation and disrepair. The respondent's apartment opens up into a fairly wide rough cast concrete area, which is evidently used as a washing and bathing area. Wooden steps lead up to a large bed room and sitting room. The house has electricity and water, a small TV and a stove as well as a fridge that does not work. The sitting room looks out into a common passage that is used by the other dwellers in the long house to enter and exit their apartments.

**SONIA'S STORY** – Sonia has lived in her present home and community for 31 years. It belongs to her mother. She came from a family of three boys and two girls. Two of the boys, she says, are now deceased. Sonia says she was born in 1968. As she puts it:

*"I don't born here I come here to live when I was 9 or 10 years." (She was born) in Roseau. "From hurricane David we come here and stay. I never see things in my life different. I make children and is like the man I make them with is all for nothing because my children not comfortable, I have how much (many) of them. We not comfortable in here because the house small. My mother sleeping inside there she not comfortable. Is like I sell my life for nothing. One thing I know I live for and I know I proud of is having my children. That is the only thing. I have 7 children. I have two boys...one 14 getting 15 September. I have one 12 getting 13 November. I have one 8 getting 9..I have one 5 getting 6 September and I have her 3 getting 4 next year and my twins...till next year giving them 2 (yrs). My eldest child is 14 getting 15, the big daughter that was here."*

**As to the men that have fathered her children:**

*"I have two with one, one with one and one with another and three with one, but I not seeing none of them who helping me. That's my daughter. (First child enters the room and sits listening to the conversation). Is like I make them in misery."*

Sonia is quick to proclaim her virtue. She continues:

*"...now, I not letting myself down because of if I suffering I going and go with different man for money (she is not doing that by having children with different men). Remember I have a lot of girl children and I have to have respect for myself so that they... even though I poor I am not going to just have myself (sell her body) ...I want to help them in*

*particular and I try my best to do anything to help them eat, but to let them see me living dirty, I can't do that. If is poor we have to stay poor, we already poor, let it be. To make them see me living life because I not working and I have man and we eating so it bound to be something wrong I doing to get ...so I living a clean life and I want them to learn from it and I don't want them to make no mistakes like what happen to me in my life for it to happen to them. So I keeping myself in order so they learn from that and I always warn them"*

**What would you say are the mistakes that you made in life?**

*"Well going and put myself with their father and is not no good result I get from it. Their father not taking care of them, how much years ...years upon years and things never get better. I not rich I still poor and they see what I going through. I have to struggle. I have to sell wrapper and cigarette to bring in a dollar so that I can buy a tin of milk to give... I still give them. When I make tea I still give them, I give everybody together. I know that my life will stay the same and never change. I am not a rich person. I not working, I cannot give them what they really want, but still I try my best to see what I can do to give them. Is cigarette I selling and little wrapper so that I can give them a dollar and buy a tin of milk for them and do something. So I rather do that (than life a dirty life)."*

**Micro-business enterprise is one strategy that has been used by the poor to effect change in their circumstances. In Sonia's case the size of her family and their associated needs seem to have always outweighed the returns that obtain from such enterprise. When Sonia is asked, have you ever tried to do any other business? She replies:**

*"... it doesn't make sense. It wouldn't work. I really try. I had a little shop there, but I was feeding them on it. The profit it cannot go back (into the business). So if I buy something to sell, I can't make back my money and buy it back. Because I have to feed them with the extra I get I cannot do nothing I have to give it to them, plus when the thing sell I have to buy it back and I can't buy back nothing. Is like I can never succeed, you know? I can never improve with nothing I making because everything I make I have to eat it. I have seven of them to look after, so it not an easy route for me."*

**The interview is interrupted by children crying and making complaints to the respondent. Sonia continues:**

*"The chairs need to redo, I already price it already, but I don't have the money to do it. And even though I have to do it, I have to do it piece by piece. I will have to think of holding a dollar to buy bread next day to give them to eat. I cannot take the money and buy things to fix up the house. What about them? They more need to eat than the chairs, so the house have to stay so still until one day maybe I get a little change."*

**Education, breaking the cycle?**

In spite of the severe deprivation faced by Sonia and her family and contrary to the tendency of girls, especially, to repeat the pattern of poverty lived by their mothers,

some of Sonia's children seem to be breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty through educational attainment. Here it is important to note the role of government.

Sonia's experiences tell of the effect of existing policies and point to the need in some instances for their modification as a means of enabling the poor in the society to overcome the constraints that condemn them to a life of perpetual want. Thus, free education is provided at the secondary level for those children that have passed the Common Entrance. In the case of those suffering from heightened deprivation, this represents the opening of a critically important door and explains the progress that Sonia's older children have made educationally. In addition to access, other assistance such as uniforms and books is provided that enable the child to be made ready to attend and participate in school. At the other end of the educational spectrum, though, the cost of preschool education could be a deterrent to the education of the very young that are poor. There is a need to extend the kind of support offered at the secondary level to at least the pre-primary level. According to Sonia,

*"Five of them will be going school. She (younger child) starting in September, but I don't know if she will really go because I cannot pay the money for the school. So if the government decide that they will help us. Pre-school (the fee is) EC\$100 per month, every month. I think is a private school, but all our preschools pay, all."*

At present two of Sonia's children go to primary, one to high school and the eldest one to Grammar school. She tells us,

*"Both of these girls passed Common Entrance examinations to attend these schools. They very smart, they very smart. And the other one coming up behind her...when they were small I used to help them do their school work. I tell them what is wrong, what is right, what they can do."*

When asked the total cost of sending the children to school Sonia chuckles and says:

*"I don't know where to start because it's really bad, it's really bad. It have time when they come from school and I don't have any lunch to give them. It have time they going to school and I don't have any money to give them."*

*Every time I think of my life I can't believe the ... I put them in. Until I say when they grow they will develop and go on their own and if they want to help me they help me. But I suffering with them. Maybe if I didn't have them things would be different, but I have them... you are a mother, I not working, you don't have nobody to help you and is you alone and ...is not a good thing. And I know they suffering because it have things they need I can't give them. When I get the money I have to see myself buying it and...I cannot give all of them at the same time. (Another young girl enters the room). Things so bad with me that they should be taking milk in tea, you know, but I have to keep on buying Carnation for them (evaporated milk) because I cannot buy (fresh) milk for them. I cannot buy it. Things so bad with me, I can't afford it. For their books I have to go and get help for them (from) Trust Fund and Welfare, she get all her books and uniform is the government that deciding they helping people with uniform that's why they get it, but for*

*me to take my money and buy it, to say buy uniform for them, I wouldn't make it. They get shoes (from government and also they need panty and brassiere and I can't buy it."*

**Coping with other living expenses – Do you have light?**

*"Yes I have light, my mother does pay it, but she is a poor person too. When people give her little change... she has to go by (place named) and sit down (begging) I don't like to see it but... and she get money. Sometimes we have to keep the light off (to reduce the bill) for too much current. We have the TV, I try to help them out, but... My daughter, she want to have her little room. I don't mind give it to her, but anytime I take out the stove and give it to her, the house going to be untidy. That is how my life stay. I leave those things in the kitchen. I feel much better. I clean. When it comes for cleanness, I always clean. I scrub the whole house. Even though I poor, but I want the house to be clean. When anybody come they will say she maybe don't really have but she try something. And I have to clean how much times a day, how much times a day to have there clean for the babies when they creeping. They is clean babies they already bathe for the morning. I always like to see them shining.*

**Distributing hunger over time:**

*"Now when I have a money I cannot go and just buy, I always hold back for in case I have to buy bread, a tin of milk. The man with the shop he does credit me until somebody gives me a little change, I does give him his money, but I cannot take so much until it go up and I cannot pay it. But it's a struggle. Having children it's a experience.*

**On a weekly basis, how much you spend for food?**

*"Don't even talk, every day I spending for food. A pound of rice is for \$2 and I cannot boil a pound of rice here and I cannot cook here every day. I cannot cook every day. I cannot (afford) to cook every day. If I cook today I cannot cook tomorrow. And if I cook is like I waste because another day coming for me to want to cook and I wont can cook. So you understand where I coming from? Ok. If I cook today is no problem I need to eat too and they need to eat. You supposed to eat every day. If I cook today and I cook tomorrow. I mightn't cook the other day because I mightn't have to cook the other day."*

**The daughter explains,**

*"...so we have to cook today, don't cook tomorrow and cook the other day. Skip a day and go on the next"*

**Sonia continues:**

*"Sometimes when I cook I doesn't remember to leave a food for (one of the children). When I believe all of them get food (it turns out that I) forget. Two missing out, one missing out. Like, (for example) I cook, I forget to give Damsel (one of her children). So many of them, seven of them , yes. And look, she greedy, she like food. She like to eat, so I always have to have more food to cook to give them. So I always stay poor. I never come*

*up now they growing and they like their food. I have to always thinking of cooking every day now to give them to eat because is children, I need them to be healthy. That is another struggle on my side again. So I may be looking outside ok, but in my mind and my heart it not easy. It not easy."*

## Early Life

*"I grew up here. I live ok. Is since I start to make them (her children) (that things have been hard). My mother, she used to work servant and give us what she have. (She used to) Clean people house..but she is poor. My father is a fisherman. I don't raise with my father. My mother left him since I was a little girl. So I never raise up with a father, she alone I know."*

Sonia says she attended primary school until she was 14 or 15. When asked why she left at that age Sonia replies:

*"Well, I go and meet her (eldest daughter) father. Not to say meet him, but things happen, you know? Life! So, you know? He ok, I thought it was good you know, but he wasn't so much of a bad fellow. Now he in drugs. Many years he in drugs, and he not coming out. Is like it in him. So it's no use, I can't tell when last he tell me, look a \$20 go and buy something for them, because he on drugs. With our school we didn't use to pay. Every day I used to be in school. I raise up ok (had enough to eat and so?) Yeah, I used to go school with a dollar bread. My mother used to make sure. And a big bottle of peanut butter. The big peanut butter bottle used to full of juice. Things was cheap at that time. "*

**Motherhood and early working life:** Sonia explains that she did not have her first child until she was 21. This is relatively late by Caribbean standards for women of her socioeconomic level. A combination of low educational attainment, disadvantage in the primary labour market, inherited poverty and the social dysfunctionalities associated with it usually leads to most women in her socioeconomic bracket having their first child by age 20.

These factors also tend to be associated with repeated pregnancies with short birth intervals. Between the time she left school and the birth of her first child Sonia explains that she was working (as)

*"...servant. People had liked me to work with them. All where I go people like me and they used to tell me they have work to do and come and do it for them. I used to work for a police and a teacher, but they not here no more. Yes. I lost a child before soon after I lose him I get her, the same year. So I say I stop, then I get the sister. Then I say no more again and I get another one. He died. I lost two and then I get that one, the girl. And then I get the boy. Then I say I ain't making no more. Then I get another one (girls laugh). I say well that's the last. Then I get those two (girls repeat)."*

**Are you finished now?**

*Yeah, well I done... for now. Every time they are a year old going up on some months, that the time I get pregnant . But the people (fathers) are not up-to-date, I don't see what they are doing for me. More misery"*

**So why do you keep on doing it:**

*"Keep on?"*

**Every time you have the same bad experience and you keep on repeating:**

*"Making? Well I feel does feel it here. I does say I shouldn't do that. But now what I can do? I cannot throw it."*

The thought of not conceiving while in a sexual relationship seems almost foreign to Sonia's consideration of the circumstances that faced her. Her next statement points to one of the motives for childbearing that often informs the reproductive behaviour of poor people.

*"Maybe six will go and I will get one for me. Will help me to remember what I go through for them and they will help me out. I just say that."*

**So, you don't believe in the contraception thing?**

*"...I don't really believe in it. I don't believe in it."*

**Children interrupt making complaints against each other. Sonia says:**

*"...they troublesome I does have to talk plenty."*

When it comes to reproductive performance, poor Caribbean women are caught in something of a time warp. Sonia's views on childbearing have to be considered against the background that Dominica is an agrarian society and would therefore tend to have in its folk culture a traditionalist pro-natal attitude towards childbearing. The presence of Catholicism, to which Sonia subscribes, would also reinforce pro-natalist views on childbearing. The relative social isolation of the poor would act as a barrier to the infusion of recent ideas and programmes relating to birth control and family planning and therefore tend to the reinforcement of these attitudes.

An important element of this social isolation would be the lack of opportunity for personal development and self-fulfilment that usually are associated with decisions to postpone childbearing from the teenage years to well into the 20s on the part of non-poor women. The availability of opportunity also tends to influence decisions on family size. Among poor Caribbean women social isolation and marginalisation have contributed to the maintenance of the high fertility levels associated with a past societal era of limited opportunity and lack of mortality control. This, even as their more well-off

sisters have reduced their fertility levels in accordance with the availability of opportunities for personal development and advancements in medical science that have led to marked reductions in childhood mortality and the necessity to have many children in order to ensure that a few survive.

At the personal level there appears to be a conflict in Sonia's mind between the availability of birth control technology and her objective social situation that ties her to traditionalist notions and attitudes relating to the bearing of children. The granting of educational opportunity to young girls from poor households on a scale that has never happen before raises the question of whether or not these changes will be sufficient to give rise to a sea change in fertility behaviour on the part of poor women that complements the transition already evident in the case of the non-poor.

### **Living Conditions:**

Sonia changes the subject.

*"As you can see the house is very poor."*

### **How many bedrooms does it have?**

*"Bedrooms? (laughter from the girls) Well you can go and watch. What you see is what I have there." There is one expansive area with two beds and mattresses made up to accommodate the members of the household. Some of the mattresses are on the floor. Nine of us sleep inside there. Sometimes ten. That's my family (pointing to cousin) she sleep with us inside there. They not comfortable inside there. Sometimes they say you squeezing me. I don't want you by me and a set of ... I wish I could do better. I cannot. I very poor. I cannot help them. I don't know what to do. And I can't get work to do because I have the babies and them to watch. So all that time I losing out on life. I stay in the back I cannot come forward. I stay there. Any money I have I cannot buy a clothes to put on me. I have to buy meals, that one (one of her children) needs food. I need a slippers, always see me walking without shoes. I have to leave myself behind buy the shoes for them. I can't see them struggle. Is like a struggling world I bring them in and is not my fault, I don't have no help. I can't always provide (food for them). It have time (when there is) no food in the house. Up to last night I almost go and sleep hungry. I have two babies taking breast you know. The twins, they taking breast. Last night I had to make some brosure and some quash flour. We had to mix it and make biscuit (girls laugh), and they were soft, they didn't have enough flour. So I poor and I think I will stay so all my life, helping them."*

### **Sonia acknowledges that her present position is due to:**

*"Having all those children and I have no father to help me. I don't want to be like the fathers. Is my responsibility to take care of them." It is pointed out that she herself did not have a father's care and assistance. She responds, "No, I never receive no father, only mother. Well, I don't really need man or nobody now, because I don't see nothing man doing for me. What I would want to see for the future, I working and don't have no man. And I want them to see that is me that kill myself out for them, no father, or nobody."*

**The gap between welfare provision and needs:**

**Sonia is asked, do you have any prospect of getting a better house? She replies,**

*"Yes, I go to check them already, but in Dominica now you have to have help. Like somebody who can pull a string, like somebody who can talk to ...if is not that you don't reach nowhere far." Is there no programme for the poor for housing?"*

The gap between intent and implementation of policy in the society is evidenced by the fact that there is such a programme that Sonia, who is truly in need of housing, knew nothing about. In fact the housing programme that she is aware of is one for persons that are working and earning a certain income. The issue is perhaps one of targeting or ensuring that the persons in greatest need in the society are indeed the ones that are provided with the resources earmarked for such persons. If those who are in need of these resources are not getting them then the likelihood is that some of those receiving them do not qualify to do so. Sonia continues,

*"...they say they going fix the long houses, but we don't saw. All that is poverty for me because I can't give myself a house or for my children. I cannot. They call these houses Long Houses. Whatever you say somebody hear you (walls are thin), they tell it to you outside there. If your children hear what you doing, they going to feel bad so you have to live clean."*

**Making the ends meet:** The people in the wider society, how do they relate to you?

*"The ghetto? It not easy to live here, it not easy. If you don't strong you falling. If you don't strong you falling, bad, bad, bad. It bad. You have to be strong. It have a time I sell the little wrapper dem. If somebody don't give me a change to buy back none I don't have. As I tell you when I sell it I not getting back the money to buy it. I eating it one time, as the money come in (one of the children will say) mommy, I want tea. I have to get that. Mommy I want tea. I have to go and buy it, so it not easy. I don't have no other income. The government helping me out with the twins. They giving me a little change. I does more depend on it. Sometimes I have to wait till the month finish. \$255 for both of them, if it wasn't for that? Suck salt. Right now school opening, I get small, I was bigger you know. By grieving off when school open, how it going to be? Because they wouldn't get lunch when they come out and don't have education in school." Explains by mimicking children, "Mommy whe the lunch? You cook nah? I hungry."*

**A fight breaks out between two of Sonia's daughters and she goes to adjudicate. She returns,**

*"...yes the pressure on me now because school opening and I don't know how it going to be for them. I don't know. Because I not working. Sometimes they come, they get lunch. Sometimes they come they don't get nothing. Sometimes I have the money to give them in the morning when I wash, I well want it back to cook the same food for them for when they come from school to get. So like is a guiyeh all over, all when I think of it is a guiyeh (struggle). So is a poverty that going on and it will never finish."*

Do you expect your children situation to get better in life from yours? Why you think it (early pregnancy, life of poverty won't happen to her?

*"Well I don't know, I just praying for them to grow and let them take their schooling. Don't go behind no boys, don't let no boys fool them and I living that life so that they can see and let them see that what happen to me don't let it happen to them. And I want them to go school, get their education, get a job and if their mind tell them to help me they will help me because they should see what I go through when I had them. Is not a easy road. I want them to see that I suffering and I really, deep down in my heart suffering. Because if I don't buy that for them, I aint getting nobody to buy it, they will not get it if I don't buy it. It will be a crisis. But now it have with children who will see their parents suffering and they don't worry, you know? Some of them don't care if you suffering. They will see only bad times when they were with you. They will still go and do bad things. ...some children."*

### **Coping Strategies:**

*"I had a little shop there, I had to stop it because the same money I earn I have to come back and eat it myself. So then when I think of going to buy back, it will never have enough to go and buy back to keep on having, to keep on going. It have to fall. I make a little kitchen selling biscuit, all of a sudden it have to stop, close down cause I cannot continue doing what I have to do. I not working to provide to make it continue going on. I eating it back. The brother I used to get help from he died. It going on six years December since he died. I have a aunty of mine in Canada. She remove off a kidney of hers come out so she not healthy. As little as she have she sending, but I cannot send and tell her I want, she sick. She on dialysis. She lose a kidney, yeah. And she tell me she always have to pay for that. So she is not a person I can depend on to always tell her, send for me, send for me, send for me. I self have love, so I don't worry with her, if I get I get, if not I don't worry with her. " When asked if none of her children's father don't support her she replies, "I make a mistake in my life. I don't just make a mistake, I make how much mistakes? It seems like I for granted. They take I for granted, they don't worry with me. So I want them to learn from that, but I don't sure because girls today they go all around, they see their friends have boyfriends and they fall in the same fire. From out of the fire, they go in the frying pan and so. They have all kind of suffering."*

### **Do you have any kind of skill?**

*"Oh yes, I can do plenty things. I can work, any work, but I cannot do computer, those works I cannot do, but servant, cleaning, combing hair and selling, yes, I can do those things."*

**Sonia explains that right now she is waiting on the Cable company to come and cut her service since she is unable to pay her bill.**

*"My mother paying the light bill. I does try and pay that (cable), but many times I does have problems with them they coming to cut it, so as little as I have I have to give them (since the t.v.) comfort them (her children). Not going to people home (to prevent them going) to give them a little comfort. I can't afford much, but I try my best. As time goes by I help them out with something. Even my mother too, I want to give her, but she know*

*what I going through, she have to tell me to hold it. She poor. When I tell you she poor. She try her best. Sometimes she sell ...mangoes, when she sell it she buy little sugar. Boy, I at least have to get money to buy a quarter bag because sugar doesn't last in the house. We always have to buy sugar. We always have to buy sugar, sometimes we doesn't have, I have to go and buy credit. ..I have a little boy he don't like food, tea he like, my little boy. To make tea for them, I have a little girl she like tea too. She like tea more than food.*

*So like, I can't really afford, but some people does give me what ever they have. They send a little messages for me because of four of those children (youngest ones). They giving me what they have because of those children. Because to me, I am not a bad person. Because of that they giving me what they have. They helping me, yes, yes. I have a friend sometimes she giving me five dollars and she buy a pack of wrappers too because she have children so she tell me she know what it like. Is just that I have more than her. I does have so much clothes here to wash, clothes like clothes, clothes, clothes and I don't have a machine. Like yesterday I wash plenty. Sometimes they have to stay there because I doesn't have soap to wash it. I doesn't have Breeze, I doesn't have (name brand) I have to wait until month end come or somebody does give me a money to buy soap to wash those clothes."*

**Sonia explains that her main expenses are food, lunch money, light bill... She says she does not buy new clothes, but wears the ones that she already has when she goes out.**

*"I don't have clothes to go out, I does have to go with the same clothes over and over." What about clothes for the children? They don't have. Some people when they have clothes that is too small, that is second hand they don't have children to give it to, they bring it to me. Yes. ..Also my little girl, a lady from ...tell me she bring something for me for her. I looking for her all know I can't see her. Yes. Because I cannot buy for all of them. Yes. "*

**The daughter:** attempting to break the cycle through education

**What form are you in?**

*"Third form sir, (school named)."*

**You passed your common entrance?**

*"Yes sir". How is it in going to that school? "sir, it nice, it nice"*

**How are you doing with your school work?**

*"Good. I doing better than before, when I just start."*

**A second young girl present joins the conversation. It turns out she is Sonia's cousin's child. She also says she is doing well in school. The discussion returns to Sonia's buying and selling. She again makes the point that it is not a sustainable activity for her.**

*"I could buy the whole world of things to sell here, it don't last, is just a style.*

*So what is the way out? Are you just going to live this way forever?*

*"The way out, it don't have no way out. Because as one come out (finish school) another one going in. When she leave school, she will be going in, so it will never finish until..look I have more of them coming up, so it don't have a end. And I not a bad mother, will see they suffering and still do nothing. I wouldn't go and live dirty life and sell my body just to feed them, although if I have to do it I will do it, but it have AIDS you don't know who is who and ...so I don't taking chance. So, I sell my wrapper and my cigarette and that's it. Now and then I get a little Queenie... All now so I going and change the cheque. I have a little cheque, I have a little cheque I get it from Welfare, I going and change it. Now once I change it I have to bring some for (the cable company) I have to give them money to buy school... now one thing I missing for them is school books"*

**The daughter intervenes saying that at school she has lots of note-taking to do. Sonia continues,**

*"I will give them their money or I will buy it for them for \$22 or \$24 for six books for \$24 If I buy 12...for both of them, 24 books come to \$88. ..Sometimes it lasts 2 terms..It doesn't last so that why I always have to keep on buying. So, thats why I tell you it don't have no end for me, no end. All now so, I have to go and change the money. I have to buy..I cannot buy all one time or else I would have a dollar. I trying to save money now because school opening I have to buy little butter, like a bowl of butter to butter their bread for school and box drink, whatever and give them money to go school and cook for when they come out of school. They have to take bus, they have to pay bus fare. One dollar to go up, one dollar to come down. Sometimes, sometimes luck and chance they get a lift. But they always have to make sure they have their money. Sometimes, they get a lift. They need their little recess. Sometimes I can't give them money, sometime they go in school with no recess and I have to give them money to pay the bus for them to reach school, sometimes they don't have no recess (recess money)."*

**The daughter adds:**

*"If we have trips in school to go out we cant, we just have to stay there because we have no money." Sonia says, "I tell them I wish I could help them, but I cannot. I see other children going and I am feeling bad, but is not my fault." I ask the daughter how she feels about not being able to go on school outings. She replies, "bad, because to see everybody going and me alone staying and I want to go. You busy to go, you going you going you going when is time to go you can't go because mummy don't have no money. Next day when you go school or next week everybody saying how nice it was and you wasn't there. That is embarrass. You feel old, bad, to see you wasn't there. Everybody enjoy themselves and you had well wanted to go to enjoy yourself. You just have to stay there."*

**Does the government give you (text) books?**

*"Yes sir" the daughter replies.*

**Sonia adds:**

*"...but you have to go to them. To welfare, but I always go, they can't do it. They shy. I don't shy I will go and tell them straight how it be."*

**No lunch is provided at school and Sonia says:**

*"...they have to stay in the school from 8 o'clock to 1 o'clock. 8 o'clock they take in school and 1 o'clock school over."*

**The daughter explains that there is a lunch programme at school. Sonia did not know that they offered one for the older children. You have to put yourself in the programme the daughter explains and adds that she is shy to do so. So I ask Sonia if she would go and register her daughter for meals at school. She replies,**

*"...me myself shy too. Is like begging (chuckles)."*

**But, she adds**

*"I never know that (of the programme at school). I put them for that (referring to the younger children) that boy and that girl. The two of them, they taking lunch in school. That is a relief for me. But now as school going to open they doesn't have. They have to come up, because they doesn't start soon when the school open. Is always after awhile, maybe after a month. They stay long while before they bring food for those children. Sometimes when they come for lunch I have to give them sweeten water and bread and tell them to go. I have to go by the road and flag transport for them to get a lift to go down and sometimes I don't have no money."*

**I ask the daughter if not having food affects her ability to study. She replies,**

*"...yes sir. Sometimes like when I go in school in the morning, sometimes I don't making tea, I busy trying to reach before the bell. If I don't reach before the bell I have stay in the sun long and that make me get headache fast, when I stay in the sun long."*

**Sonia adds,**

*"they leaving them in the sun, when they come late they leaving them in the sun for punishment. And when I go inside in the class I can't even do the work is just sit down and the teacher talking (Sonia "because she hungry, she hungry") and I before break three periods have to past and when the three periods past break, sometimes I don't even have nothing for break and sometime if I don't have, my friend don't have, we just there, starving."*

**The daughter reports that she is doing well in school in spite of the hardships she faces. She expects to sit CXC examinations in two years. She reports an interest in**

*"Business, Science, because I want to be a nurse, Food and Nutrition, Geography, Maths, Social... and some History."*

**Sonia reports that for her another daughter she has to pay \$300 per term to attend a private high school. For the first daughter she only pays \$50 because the school is a government school. For her two other children attending school she pays \$20. The daughter reports that if you owe money for school and they tell you to bring it and you don't:**

*"...either you bring your parent or you just stay home."*

**Support from the community:**

**Sonia says she has never been unable to pay the school fees because:**

*"It have a man from Stewart Town, Mr. Smith, that help us pay it. From the church, the Catholic Church."*

**The daughter adds,**

*"He makes us come to the church and he gives us lessons about God and life and...after that we making first communion and after we making first communion he start helping us by coming to school and taking out pictures and getting sponsors for us."*

**The daughter reports that she is a member of the church, both she and**

*"...my bigger sister. Not primary only secondary"*

**Sonia explains,**

*"We used to get money from him every month, but it stop, I think the church have to fix. So from that they stop it, but he help me with those children for their school fee. I can say God bless that man. I can't put myself in too much strain... I am a Catholic, sometimes I go to church, but as I have those children it not easy for me. If I bring one I have to bring the other. Sometime I wake up to look after one time I watch time run with me and I can't go again. But those people in the church they tell me they know how it is and what I going through with the twins, yes."*

**The role of Fathers:** Sonia is asked if she is likely to have any more children. Her reply is:

*"I don't want to nuh. I not saying that one and don't do it, no, no, no. I does always saying that one and don't do it, but knowing is twins that would be pure crisis to do that. They don't have good father, is like they come out of a tree and fall." Why don't you carry the father to court for maintenance? "Even though I bring them you have to have proof, like somebody can say well is true."*

**What about paternity tests?**

*" You don't have to do all that nuh. The thing is now if me and you have a child you have to have your ID and I have to have my ID and when we go to register the child that is how..."*

**That did not happen with your children?**

*"Yes they register... but I not a bad mother to think about that. They have to know that they have their responsibility to think about ... they will hate me...those children, they can hate you. Though they know the father aint giving you, but they can hate you because is their father. What they proud of is that they have a father, even though the father don't helping them, because it have children that grow up with no father. Even though it may be an ex-father, a man who agree to put his name for my children just so to let them know they have somebody behind them I can do it, but knowing that is not their real father."*

**Sonia is asked if the children have any interaction with their fathers.** She says that one lives nearby, but because he is into drugs she keeps them away from him. His addiction is to (drug name deleted) mixed with (drug named deleted).

*"So I can't have them mingling with him."*

**Sonia goes on to lament the fact that she can't buy uniforms for her pre-school daughter. Someone has promised to bring two for her but has not turned up. With the older children she says she gets their uniforms from government. If is not that they don't have.**

*"If is not government I can't buy it with my own money because I don't have money to buy it for them. Even though I have a money to buy it for them when I have five of them to buy uniform for, after all. I can't buy it. I not boasting, I cannot."*

**In looking on her life Sonia says,**

*"...all I can say is that my children is them I am going through that for. If it wasn't for them I wouldn't be here. The suffering? Maybe I would be suffering on my own... as I have them... children responsibility is not easy. Through of them I suffering, because they do not have father, I cannot give them what they want I not working. I not going to make them see me living dirty life and for them to do it. I have to set example for them."*

**Hoping for a better future – coping with the present:**

*"All now so, I make an application to work. I like to work I want to work ...in the (place named) I want to go and work. So that I can leave (work) at 1 and come and so something inside here, all my work inside here, everything."*

**Sonia says she thinks she will get the job she has applied for. As she puts it,**

*"Yes man I made my application and if those people have a good mind, maybe they will take me. All now so, I need carpet I can't buy it. I need the chairs to fix, I have to leave it at the back, because I need the money to feed them. If I buy carpet is luck and chance. I decide well today I buying carpet and start all over again."*

*I have gas bill, I have to...twenty-something dollars, it was fifty-something, they go down on it. If I don't buy the gas is a strategy for me to go and light the fire for them to go to school in the morning. Send them to school every morning and can't light the fire so they go down school hungry. So I need the gas. The gas is very important to me. If I don't have it I have to use coals. Times I don't have the money to buy it. Is a strategy world I living in here. Is a strategy world I living in. I don't think nothing will ever get better for me. Knowing that as one go I have another one coming up, as one go I have another one coming up and ...it will be just so. It not easy."*

*All now so, I have to cook because I have two babies to feed. I cannot make them grow just so. I goes, I have to buy yahoos, I have to buy milk. I cannot buy the milk I really want them to drink like lactogen. I cannot buy those things, I have to buy Carnation*

*milk, which I don't suppose to be giving them but since I can't afford I have to buy to see them looking alright because I cannot have them looking..it have time they taking breast from me and I hungry, you know and I have to push them away because I not suppose to be breast feeding them and hungry. I can't be hungry and still breast feeding.*

*So I have to make a little glucose to drink quick... but I don't regret. I mean one day all these things will come to pass. It will pass. I struggle before. This little girl, the father leave me two weeks deliver and went to prison for one year and three months. So all that time you suppose to know I guiyae (struggle), but don't worry she grow up. She cleaning there, she cooking for me, anything If I say I want something she get it for me.*

*Time by time I start to see things changing. It's just that I make one I say I stop, another one coming. I say I stop, another one coming. I say I stop another one coming. I don't know what happen. So maybe I have to have them. And you know, they have to be here too. Is not my fault, because everyone glad that they living. You understand me? You glad you born, nuh true? I have five boys and two girls. I don't make no more. I don't intend to because I not getting no good treatment, no marriage. Is like I live my life for granted. I always say that. I live my life for granted, yes.*

*It not easy. I wish I could get a house. For how many years I here and nothing don't change- get a land. I like the town, as I raise in the town I would like to stay in the town. But why I can't take it I can't rent because the money I will be using for rent, I want it. Is just a bad life for me. Just a bad life, and I have to buy milk every second, milk, milk, milk to give them. Sometimes I have to buy a Milo, I can't drink the same tea all the time. I have to change the milk. And the shops here expensive, very expensive. When I sell sweetie, those children eating all the sweetie. Buy corn curls, they eating it. My mother buy a little bubble gum...they eating everything. They don't worry if you struggling. They don't worry if you don't have...The fridge now it working, but I can't have it because if I have it on I have to think of getting money for light, because it pulling current. I have to be going and ask for ice and I have a fridge and can't use it. It have people you see walking down the road and things really bad with them you know. You see them looking nice and, but is me to tell you. If I don't tell you, you won't know.*

*Now the little money I going and change I don't want it to finish because if it finish now, time for school I wouldn't have nothing to give them. So I have to stretch it, stretch it. But even though it finish is still on them it going because I don't have nobody to give it to. I don't owing nobody, so everything is on them. Next week school open and I start to feel a kind of way because I know is pressure. Whole week I have to think about give them money to go school...pressure start to rise up."*

**Some days later Sonia is again interviewed and she reports that she is having problems getting books for her children. She says the government helps them 'good' by giving them uniforms:**

*"...because it have some people that cannot afford to buy uniforms for their children. Probably cost of living, you not working and when you not working is frustration on your side.*

### 9.3 CASE STUDY 2: GLORIA – THIRTY-SEVEN YEAR OLD MOTHER OF EIGHT CHILDREN

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#### **Main Themes – Social Exclusion, Marginalisation, Intergenerational Poverty, Hunger, Sexual and Physical Abuse, Failure of Social Service Delivery**

**Overview:** Gloria lives on the Carib lands in Dominica. Ethnically she is Carib, but she had a black father whose brother also produced a child with her mother. She suffers from a sort of double exclusion since within the marginalised Carib community she is regarded as something of an anomaly. Her story is full of pathos. Her mother subsequently took up with another man and had seven children for him. That relationship did not work out. The respondent was left virtually uncared for. She had to start fending for herself at a very young age, certainly before 13. She had to prostitute herself in order to get sugar and milk for herself and her siblings. She barely attended school. She had her first child at 14. She subsequently got involved with a man three years her senior and bore him some six children. His tale is a woeful one. He became alcoholic, a non-provider for his family, very irresponsible. When under the influence of alcohol, he abuses his wife.

#### **Present circumstances:**

The respondent currently resides in a wooden shack that was given to her by her husband. The respondent has attempted to take her life. At the time of the interview she was in a state of depression. Gloria lives in a small wooden house that has a sitting area, outside kitchen and toilet facilities and a room that acts as a bedroom. She says that she and her children sleep on the ground because of insufficient beds and bed space. In speaking to Gloria one gets the impression that she suffers from structural as well as cultural disadvantages the fact of being half Carib, Carib and exclusion from effective participation in the labour market. Gloria subsists on \$350 per month that she obtains from the Welfare Department. The following is her account of her life experiences.

#### **Early life:**

*"I born in Sinaco (Carib territory) but my father is a, how do you put it now, a negro...neg, Carib would say a neg, so we call them, nigga. My mother she is a Carib, but mixed. My father used to operate on the road. This is 1971 (as Caterpillar driver). So my mother now used to work, give water and so on the road. So they get together and they make me, you know. As a baby my father never take care of me 100 percent. My father he live in here with my mother and then he went back to his place and everything finish. After now she start to get other men and she get other children. My mother have 12 children. My other sister she mentally retarded like... she rarely have a man, but not to say she normal like me. I more work like garden work and ...my other sister she in Trinity and my brother is a fireman in ...Dominica. My other sister she just about to graduate from ...Ecuador. My other sister she married and studying accounting in ...But I know*

*my mother she make us, she leave us to make her own children she married. The man have seven children with her...and that man die. Then she (start to be) with other men. I was the biggest child in the house, but I was on my own already ...get Daniel (her husband). I struggle a lot with that man, Ferdinand."*

**Gloria returns to her mother's experiences:**

*"After she make me with my father, she love my father brother and she make my sister. She make that child with my father's brother. I don't know if they were together, (maybe) she do a little thing beside my father. After she make my sister my uncle leave her, then she end up with a next man, but she didn't have a child with that man. Leave the man, she end up being on her own, you know? And then she struggle..when my granny see that because she used to leave us with my granny and my grandpa, I raise with them and then she used to leave us with my granny. When my granny see how she used to run her life my granny say well she is a big woman she have to get her place. She end up with those children father, my sister now. So we end up was living down on Turner Road, where they building a house right now.*

*After she leave me and she get married she come back and tell my granny, well she need me. I was six years old... so she send me meet my mother. After she send me to meet my mother, my mother couldn't maintain me right... to send me to school. You know, she love that man. We didn't have things like nothing. We didn't have a house like that. The man had a little wooden house, maybe one room and a house. I would be sleeping on the side of the bed and she and the man would be lying on the bed. Before hurricane David that wind that pass break the house and we start to live in little houses that make with coconut leaves, grass, we cut grass and make houses. When we stay down there my mother say she can't make it, so we have to go up on our land. We alone were living on that land up there. When we go there, my stepfather he still could not maintain my mother and those children because is babies they have... talking about that, you should see the place where we was. He wasn't making it at all, at all and he used to go and steal people things. Go in their garden, steal their tannia, steal their banana. We was poor. People used to give my mother clothes, used to give my mother shoes. She had like that baby there (pointing to her own baby) and she had other children."*

**Premature womanhood:**

*"After that when I see that I put myself out and go and make children, put myself in life and go and make children. When I get my first child I was 14 years you know? I used to go school once in a while."*

**What about your grandparents, what did they used to do?**

*"My grandparents, is gardening they used to do. My grandpa used to go and fish... work on the same road making drains. When my grandmother see I start to make children she say if she had known she would not have sent me with my mother. Because is I know had to go and like... if I see they don't have sugar at home a man like wouldn't give me his \$20 for nothing, you know! He would come and tell me, if you want that you have to lie down for that. I end up all doing that. I end up all working with man, working. And then man using me the same money they paying me they using me sexually. And when I see that, children and children coming.*

*My first child she is 22 years old now living with a young man and getting the same struggle... getting blows no-one to work and give her nothing. I don't want my child to fall like that. And, is so I end up. Struggle, struggle, struggle, all the time. My stepfather say I big because I used to work and bringing things in the house all the time. Buy milk and sugar, get wood and water, because we didn't have a pipe. Used to go river and get those things and comeback. One night when I talk to those children in the house, my sister she is smaller than me. I say not to waste the milk like that, take care. My mother tell me if I don't want her children to use what is my own, get my place (quotes it in Carib language). And I tell her I don't have nowhere to go and I have a little boy now the boy is 16 years and my first daughter, who is 22 years. When I see that I had to take my clothes and put it under a coconut tree, rain falling from that, rain. I pack everything on my bed. I didn't have any kind of good thing, you know? My dirty bed, my foam, my pail... she had given me a little corner in the house is there I used to put my clothes, change my clothes everything. I go and see if I get a little place to sleep the night. I go and get a little place to sleep for me and my children."*

**Starting a long-term relationship:**

*"And is so I end up now with that man Daniel. He had a little house there he say I could come and stay with him. We stay there, we struggle, struggle, struggle. Each time he work on the estate he come back he fighting with me. I have to be leaving here and going back to my mother house to sleep. Coming up going back, coming up going back. When he give me the little boy for nine months I did not have anything. He left and went to... when the boy get two years, or three years I see he reach Dominica."*

During his absence Gloria says she had left her children with an aunt and her mother and gone out to work. She says her mother called her and told her to come for her children so she had to return to the district and again became involved with Daniel.

*"I have to come back and struggle. When I come back I get myself involved with the same Daniel again. Well, we stay together. We stay like that making children. Ah time we fren, ah time we vex. Ah time we fren, ah time we vex. Ah time we fren, ah time we vex."*

Gloria goes on to relate how a St. Lucian lady came and offered to make a house for her and her children. She convinced Daniel to give her a piece of land on which to build the house. This is the house in which she presently lives. She says that Daniel had nowhere to go and eventually had to move in with her.

**Marginalisation, disempowerment and abuse:** Gloria continues:

*"...the minister (of government) come to see me last year. The earthquake come, it shake down...I say I don't know what dream the minister will have to come and visit us. When I watch I see I see he coming and is the minister. He come inside. He watch my house. He tell me he will give me a few mattresses. He tell me come and check him in his office, but I feel scared to go there. (laughs) If I had like someone to bring me there and to talk to him. But to go up the step. I don't even know the minister step...the amount of police and thing like that, I say no, I scared. Then I see him pass and come and visit the housing scheme, but I never...you know? I still in the same struggle. I really have a boyfriend."*

*I really in house with Daniel. I still, but not to... I was telling Dr. Smith the other day. I tell him I don't have no feeling for that man"*

She explains that he treats her badly.

*"Up to this week here when he come up we had trouble. I had to call the police for him. He would come in here and curse those children, telling me shut up, (calling me) nasty, ill treating me. He take cutlass, kick me and... when he drink his rum, you know, alcohol? Next morning he will not even watch you, feeling well, I did nothing wrong in the night. I mean, I not blaming him (steups) I just feel... I tell Mr... for God's sake for us to live a better life is to forget about the alcohol. It will help bring him nowhere! Is best he forget about it and forget about it. If you drink you alcohol stay on the road and don't come in the house. But still he will come and burst my... and say Gloria and say (Carib language). But still my son, my first son, when he hear him he will just put himself in place and go about his business and shut his mouth and lie down till morning. From he hear the boy, he tell him shut you mouth. You drink you rum already, mummy not troubling you, leave mummy alone. Mummy not troubling you. He will hush his mouth, you know. Since I call police he will not even stay here. I have six children (with Daniel) All of those children is his own. But is not a man that treating me 100 percent, I have to struggle for my children. I have to struggle. See that little place (room inside house), I sleeping there on the floor with my children. One thing about it they are girls. My son sleeping in the kitchen and they are little. That girl there is 11, that one is 6, that one, the last one is 1. The other is 7 years and the other big girl is 12, she will be 13 years in September and the little boy outside is 3 years. But my first boy is 16 years."*

#### **Poverty across the generations: like mother, like daughter:**

Intergenerational poverty is sustained by structural inequalities that exclude persons from access to resources they need to develop their human potential. In the case of Gloria's family this is evidenced by the fact that she inherited her poverty from her mother (who in all likelihood inherited from hers). She reproduced the circumstances of her mother's life in her own. Now her own daughter is reproducing Gloria's circumstances of marginalisation and deprivation in her own life. While individuals have to be held accountable for the decisions they make in their lives, the consistency in the circumstances of the grandmother, daughter and granddaughter suggests the existence of societal arrangements that constrain, limit and restrict individuals in their quest for personal development. The experiences of Gloria's family suggest the existence of a broader set of societal factors at play that impel the members of this community to make personal decisions that conduce to individual lives marked by extreme need, lack of self fulfilment and self realisation. Factors such as unemployment, early and repeated pregnancies, alcoholism, physical and sexual abuse on the scale that seems to exist in this community are manifestations of institutionalised systems of inequality, marginalisation and exclusion.

**Gloria continues her account:**

*"My first child is not even here, is a next person child. She lives on her own. She live just over the way. She have a man. The man is giving her children...is there she eating, by me. Is there she drinking. Is there sometimes she sleeping too (pointing to places in her house). This man he want to drink his rum again. Is a young man you don't know what he using, what he not using. Is the same problem. I have to (find) the money, the sugar, to give her. She have five children. She have two for adoption and she have three there right now. She is 22 years. She gave away two for adoption. She have a baby right now and she have two, a small boy like this one. But if I have to tell you, the blows she getting you would never believe. He will make his money and he will just take it and burn it out in drink or... and those children they little. They (only) big so. She don't getting no assistance from nowhere. What I would... I always saying if one day God would send somebody to help her. Help me for her to get a little assistance, you know from somewhere because is misery for she and her children. She don't getting no money from nowhere. When he have his money he take it and burn it in whatever he is burning it in."*

**Gloria explains that her daughter has not approached the government for assistance because:**

*"...she shy...What she saying, people will say her man is a young man, he working (place called)but nobody don't know her problem at home. Sometimes when she don't have money she run come by me... I have to give her... give her soap... When they want a clothes is here they rush come to ...shoes the same thing they does rush come inside here."*

**Coping strategies: Credit:**

Gloria is asked about her sources of income. She replies,

*"...well, Welfare helping me. I get \$375. I get credit from the shop. I paying \$115 in the shop. My light bill, sometimes I have to pay \$100 or if is not that I have to put \$50 and the next \$50 I have to hold it. I have to send my children to school. Their snack is to pay every morning. I have three children going to primary; one for pre-school and I have the girl there and the boy there for secondary. I don't paying for bus fare, there term for their school work is that I have to pay. But for their snack, every morning they want a snack too... Every day I have money to give them nothing to buy snack every day. I don't have that money. Sometimes my son going to school with a little juice."*

**Child shifting:**

*"The girl... she used to live with a woman you know, for adoption and when I hear what happening with the woman now..."*

**Gloria continues her accounting telling how someone told her to take her daughter from the woman that had adopted her because they met her in a dance in the town**

*"...after 12 in the morning and the child is just 11 years, you know! And he tell me to go and take out the child there, I go and take out the child there. Since after that everybody turn against me. CCF, the Welfare officer she used to tell me hello nice ...The woman*

*working with Families in Action in town. My child tell me in the morning when they leave Roseau in the morning going up to ...the woman tell the chauffeur look for my three children and for the Carib! When you take my child here I didn't have Welfare, I didn't tell Welfare you taking the child. You never tell ...you taking the child. You ask me a child to adopt and now when my child with your children..."*

**Gloria explains that one reason why she gave up the child to the woman is so that she could send her to school in town (Roseau), but she could just as well have sent her to the local school.**

*"I take back my child. But it have a next lady who want a little boy from me, from (place called) but I don't know. I don't know. I don't feeling to give people my children, you know! (Voice drops) I don't feeling to give people my children because this past struggle I past there..."*

**Failure of the male breadwinner:** In describing the cost of sending her children to school, Gloria says:

*"Sometimes I buy a quarter bag of sugar and a quarter bag of flour that finish already. I don't have no money again to buy sugar and is credit all the time I have ask from the shop. The little \$300, praise God again ah getting it, time I get it I can't buy nothing for myself." Asked about support from her husband, Gloria says, "That man there? When you see he go and work, when he reach down by the road there, it have a shop down there by the roadside, he would just sit down there. People call him Gad, Gad. Sometimes I have to go down there and ask him for money by the roadside. I calling him, call him call him and Gad would never watch that. If I don't jump on Gad on the roadside... I already jump on him already...he hit me all with knife on my forehead...sake of money. And he sitting down there. Day by day he sitting down there...he drinking (and) making drinks for friend. He saying he don't worry with fam, he don't worry with fam. He don't worry with women. He don't worry with children. They at home they have fig, they have salt, they have wood, so he don't worry with them. And he staying... three days on the street.*

*When his money finish you would see he reach here, well shame. And he reach he would take his cutlass and go to (place called) and look for (shell fish) by the rock. Now he bring it. Everybody eating they happy. Money finish. But he would say, he asking me, when I drawing my money from Welfare. I say if I have my money that's not your business because when you have your money, I don't see you. He telling me, if he didn't give me those children, how I would get money. I say well is I carry them and is I make them. We getting talk on that eh. He say if it was not for him I wouldn't have children and must give him a little five dollars. Each time I get a money I buy the sugar there, I buy the flour there, is you that eating it. So you don't have get money in your hand for you to think Welfare giving me money.*

*He is a fisherman. He is a alcoholic. He is a mason, he is a garden man. He making his craft. He making all a bird, coconut shell, he can make boat, he make basket but you know, he just don't worry with nothing. (He is) 40 years. (I am) 37. When he have money, he happy. Since he don't have money, he always vex. He don't want to hear nothing. Don't tell him nothing. So, you see now he go on Estate? He work there with my sister boyfriend in town, he bring little sugar, he bring little flour. He tell me he*

*bringing \$100 for me to go and make school shopping for my children. When he reach down the road there how much you think I get? Forty-five dollars."*

**The personalisation of social service delivery:**

**Gloria explains that her big son who is 16 years old sometimes works on the Estate, even though he still attends school and is in his final year. She says that he has to struggle to make the school fees**

*"...cause his father don't giving him he not getting money from his father."*

**Gloria explains that the piece of land on which her house sits is not the only land she has. Her mother she says gave her another piece.**

*"I can do farming, but I don't have the gramoxzone to put on the grass...I can dig, I can pay somebody to help me if I have a little money. But the most thing I do is to plant a little... to make craft. I plant every thing. I planting potato, I planting banana ...small crop."*

**She explains that she also does a little planting on another little piece of land.**

*"But is just the help, you know? I don't have help. I can plant some many things. I can raise animal. I can raise pig."*

**Government agencies involved in various projects she says used to visit her:**

*"...but since after I take the child from the woman she call everywhere she know I was putting my head and she make them turn against me. So I don't have nobody now. I don't have nobody. But I don't want to have no ... with her. I don't want her to have no link with me and my child. I just don't want to hear her, because what she do... (allowing her daughter of 12 years to be at a dance past midnight. Reliably informed by a trustworthy person).*

*The Welfare persons she said did not want to hear her side of the story on the matter. "They never want to hear I talk. The Welfare officer and the man from CCF, she never wanted to hear I talk, she say is lie I lie. Never! Never! They never take time with me and say well aahmm, let me listen to you... to her side. They say, is lie you lying! You are a woman like to lie. You like to make people admire you and come at your home and say well you poor! Those things there ..and since that time they have my children uniform in the office, I never go and get it. And I don't feeling to go and beg them for nothing. ..I tell the woman you working for (the public). I take all my children there they take out there picture. If I didn't do you wouldn't have ...I keep you up to date and look at what you doing me. I had to go and beg a next lady, you know? She give me \$140 to go and register the child after I take her out from (the school she used to attend). The child father never tell me he going to struggle for her. So I myself I don't feeling like ... outside you know, if I get other project from outside. I tell them I don't have no feelings for them again because they put me down. I cry for a whole week because of what the CCF manager tell me."*

**Gloria does not think the people in charge of those who are against her will listen to her account of the story.**

*"...Is best I just leave it. I don't know I don't know what to do, I just there. That alone (monthly cheque) is what I getting from Welfare. I have to pay people to go and get wood for me because I have a bad knee. I cannot do all that walk, because it hurting me and my hand, I used to peel coconut you know?*

*Once I drink (insecticide) I almost kill myself. Because I was vex and I was pregnant four months when I drink it. Daniel and my family we were fighting for a piece of land and my brother he tell me to leave the land and Daniel had a man come there at 1 o'clock in the morning... and tell me to leave the house, that house is for Daniel... his sister husband. So I tell him you can't tell me that is my house is ... that make it for me. He tell me to leave the house. So I get vex. After that I was in hospital in ... after that they transfer me to Dr... for counselling. Wednesday I was there. He tell me I don't going crazy or I don't mad, but the pressure I have. You know, he tell me I have to come and to chat and..."*

**The need for assistance:** What about employment? Have you tried to get a job?

*"I say right now if I get a job, I have my baby. I have my baby. But, if I get something to do like gardening? I will do my gardening.*

**Gloria thinks she could get a good income from the piece of land she has. It is about one acre. There is another piece she says that belongs to Daniel. She says if she got help with her piece she:**

*"would plant all kinds of things. I would plant vegetables, I would do my best to help myself. But, you know I don't have money."*

**And she is not into asking people to work for her since they might want to ask her favours in return.**

*"I don't want that. I have my money, I pay you. And my big boy, you know, he would help too. My girl she have a small baby, but you know...all of us we put ourselves together and work to have something.*

**Deprivation and family breakdown:**

*"I don't want to go and steal and I don't want to go and beg people, you know. For they say my husband young and we young you know. Mostly is the husband they blaming because they say when they pass by the road they see him sit down and drinking rum, you know? They say if I giving you money you maintaining the man with the same money and the man making his money by the road, you know? I can't go and fight with him and every time I fight with him is a knife I getting to my forehead ...every time I have to just rush, rush, rush at that man there for money. I fed up with those things there, I fed up. Maybe I end up getting blows and he might kill me, you know? He does live here, but is not to say live here often like a place to staying. He will come there, he will come there and stay for 2 days and nothing don't working out with him. You know like I am his wife and you would be sleeping together with a man and a man sleeping together with you, you know. He only stay. We don't sleeping together. We don't have no sex, nothing. He wouldn't stay here. He wouldn't go for wood, he wouldn't give me his*

*money, he would do nothing for me! See all my bathroom breaking, is my son that have to do it. ..We there, he already say he not getting my body, he not getting nothing from me. He bring a little thing for his children. And when he come and ask what they have, they will maybe say they don't have sugar, he will go and lend a pound of sugar by his sister and bring it come for them, you know, and go for coconut, and go for a little crab and make a little sancoche. After that he go by the road, we never see him. It have a little house down by the road, a little coconut leaf house, down so when you going down so by the roadside. That's his own, that's where he does sleep, bar up with sticks and coconut leaf cover it. So is there he does rest himself."*

**Reality, aspiration and despair:**

**In matters of health, Gloria explains that if her children are sick she takes them to the public clinic, which is free. She points out, however, that her children do not usually get sick. In terms of accommodation Gloria points out that the house has only one bedroom, one in which her children can:**

*"...hardly turn.' One person sleeping on the bed, two persons on the floor... two boys sleeping with me, is so we stay on the floor with two sheet and a blanket. Is so I sleeping. I don't have no big house is just as you see it. See it there. If I had help, you know. A house, I would like to have a house to see my children comfortable, man. I would like to see a little television for them. When they go at people home, people make them shame. Tell them go at their home...you know? I don't feeling happy to see I can't even turn inside there. If I sick how it going to be? If you have to change your clothes, children sleeping on the floor. If you go and bathe, you don't have place to change your clothes. I feeling to myself how I going to get... I just don't know, where I going to find money. Other people I see in their house, they have a good little house and everything in there, eh. How I going to be, how I going to be where I don't have money."*

*What for me to do? I find...I don't know, I don't know who to face, I don't know where to go because I don't have help. Sometime I just feel shame for someone to come by me, you know? To lie down on the floor that is not shame?"*

**Gloria explains that she has received some pieces of plyboard from the Chief,**

*"...but who giving me the posts to make these into house? I don't have money to pay for someone to go and saw it for me. I don't have money to go and pay someone to saw it. Is ten sheets of plyboard, but where is the galvanize to provide, I don't have those things there, you know?" Would go to the Ministry of Housing and ask them for assistance? I wouldn't go, I wouldn't go because I don't know how to approach them... if somebody local would come by me, but I myself would not go to approach nobody because I don't even know how to tell them, how to approach them, you know? I don't know. I don't know what to say about it."*

**The Caribs, a community marginalised? Do you think that because you are a Carib person you have a harder time?**

*"Well, I saying that. Because to watch our place, Carib Reserve really (there is) a spell that fall on us, you know."*

### What do you mean?

*"I will tell you about it. Everybody lazy around Carib reserve, you know, like they don't have... When they get that little money they just go and drink rum with it. They will not... because we cannot go in the bank and say they we putting a paper (land title) in the bank and give us a loan because we don't have no value for our land and thing like that. It have value to go and plant little thing, food and that, but to go and use it to take a loan, you cannot do that. What we have to do, we just have to stay like how we...in our place around here we don't have a nice house... we don't have nothing. The (Community) Centre, it lock up, no activity. We don't have nothing to put... to play in it. We hardly have a church in our place, what you see is a little... and people drinking alcohol. Everybody sit down by the road. I don't know."*

### Making the comparison:

**Gloria demonstrates a sociological turn of mind in her analysis of the situation facing the Carib community. She understands the link between the situation of the Carib community, its marginalised and disempowered status, and her own impoverishment even if she is not sure of the precise mechanisms that are responsible for her own situation. She continues her analysis,**

*"A little boy in, according to ... in neg place, nigga place, you would see they have their little house, you would see they have their church spot, they dress and... you know, treating themselves like people who have big higher jobs. But here, you see how we stand. We hardly dress. You hardly pass by us and get a scent of roll-on, you know? We just there ...a spell, a spell on them."*

### **She shifts from the structural to the personal.**

*"I don't know, I feeling to myself, I feeling to myself, I don't know how I poor like that? After a man working his money to spend for rum and... I don't know, he don't bring in his money to see I have money. I don't know..."*

**The reality of indigence:** The illegal way out of her misery is not a viable option for Gloria.

*"Drugs will spoil the community and put me in trouble, in prison and leave my children and I don't know what men will do with them... the same struggle I go through."*

### **Therefore she returns to a state of fatalism and resignation and to indigence.**

*"So, best I just see my little misery, boil my little sancoche and ...my children if they don't have tea we go and pick a jelly for them. Every day I have to get 5 pounds of flour for the next day to make their breakfast because they going to school every day. When the week come, five pounds of flour I taking. The lady can't give me more than that. The lady can't give ...as I watch that finish already. Juice every morning and flour and they want bakes to bring over so, they want bakes to bring over so in the next school as a little snack. When lunch, I don't have. (I) have to guiyae (struggle) and looking for a little fig and making their supper and go in the ravine for crab and crab and make sancoche*

*coconut for them for their supper, maybe red soup for them for their supper and ...you know? Their father say he don't worry, you know?"*

**What do you give them for dinner?**

*We make lunch (at) 5 o'clock. It don't have supper for them. It don't have nothing for us to make for them for supper. When I give them food in the morning, when they come back 12 o'clock they eat, that is all. The morning meal if I have \$5 I will buy \$2 bread, milk and pound of sugar. That is for their tea. For their lunch, when they come back maybe I have to go and get a coconut grind it and make their food for them with coconut and maybe fig (banana) because we have a lot of grind coconut and put a little piece of garlic in it.*

**What about meat?**

*"We doesn't have meat like that because I tell you straight I don't even have fridge at my home and we don't have money to buy salted thing and put in a pail, nothing no sardine no tin stuff. And things expensive in our place. When you have one \$5 that don't even enough to buy sugar in our place. So they have to go and sleep like that, or I have to say go by granny and see if you get some sugar or I have to see go and see if you lend some sugar. Sometimes I send them to shop (to get credit) (and the shopkeeper complains) every day (you are coming for credit). That is why my children doesn't go to school often because they don't have the means. Sometimes I grind that thing there, banana. I does grind it and make a thing like porridge to cook put coconut in it and give for them for their lunch or their supper. Give them some in the morning for their tea and then 12 o'clock when they eat the rest... sometimes we don't have nothing for supper we have to go and sleep like that."*

**Gloria is asked:** What do you think is going to happen?

*"What do I think is going to happen? I just have to pray to God to see what will happen because I don't know what is going to happen. I don't know... so whenever I going to sleep I always pray and ask God to bless my needs. I always put God in front and if it was not for God I would not be able to be on my foot, I would be a dead woman already."*

**It is pointed out to Gloria that she got a bad start in life that led to her being unprepared to deal with adult responsibilities. However, if she could get some assistance with housing and the farming that she wishes to carry out, things would be better for her and her family. Farming the land would ensure that she and her family have food. Gloria interjects:**

*"I would plant and sell. Right now I don't have help. By my mother land I have place up there but is just grass on it. My son do a little thing, but we need gramoxone (grass killer) and seeds and ...you know? You see my house, is there I sleeping. My children want their privacy they want me to make room for them, but where I going to make room... I myself working hard in my garden. I working very hard. I am a hardworking woman. Now if you go, if you one day visit to see my place what is missing is gramoxone for me to spray up and go back and plant because all the land dig up already and a hole is there. I can plant my plantain and my tannia, but is the gramoxone I don't have to spray up my place and put it how I should put it."*

### How do you feel about being a Carib person in Dominica?

*"I feel a way, they say indigenous people, I don't feel that have no value in it nuh, I don't feel it have value in it because when you watch indigenous people they saying and it don't have no value. No money, we don't rich, we don't have no ambition, you know? We still suffering, it don't making sense and I don't feeling comfortable. I really there you know but I shouldn't be in that kind of state, struggling with my children and ...you know? How much money I have to spend for school bag and shoes... the little \$300 they give me... you know? I just finding that maybe I could live... I would be already better off myself, getting help. It don't making sense. I there in the place, but I don't feeling 100 percent that I am a Carib, you know? I am a mixed breed, I am not a Carib. I don't feel proud about that... I want to make a change in me for people to see well, you know? I... I feeling odd. I feeling odd, a lot, lot, lot. I cannot buy shoe for myself. I cannot buy eat and drink for my children.*

*Every day you have a old grater, you cut a piece of galvanize like that. You make holes with nails. You run in the ravine for a crab, you make a little sancoche. You run by the sea for a little thing, you know? No money, you have to make basket to sell, the place poor, man. It poor, poor, poor, poor. We have the land and no help, no market. I think if I have my potato if I plant my potato I can make market I know where to sell... maybe making... and selling by the market in Roseau.*

*But like now, I don't feeling too comfortable. People have to leave and go Shenton and work on estate... little money, my husband would make a little money, when he come take it and drink rum and there is no tea for us to drink in the house. I don't feeling too comfortable at all, at all, at all. Some people feel ah too poor for them to talk to me, ah too low-class then. I praying to God for one day to have a little better house and... With my children, I don't like to see the way they are lying down on the ground... it really hard, it really hard..."*

This case study is very instructive with regard to the exclusion-poverty-exclusion link. Gloria's marginalisation within Dominican society, it would seem, is responsible for her poverty and her poverty in turn reinforces her marginalisation. Gloria's story is also of sociological significance for another reason. The studies of poverty that have been done throughout the region point to a strong association between family and intergenerational poverty. In particular, there appears to be a link between the pattern of mating where women enter into visiting and consensual cohabitation relationships with a number of men throughout their reproductive life cycle, bearing children for them.

Given the fact that women in these unions have less exposure to the risk of pregnancy than those in stable monogamous relationships the relatively higher levels of fertility of these unions is something of a demographic anomaly. The combination of high levels of fertility and serial mating means that there is no constant presence of a male figure who provides material and emotional support to the children.

This is not to say that in this type of family structure the respective fathers of the children do not make such contributions. However, these tend to be intermittent to the point where the woman often feels the need to seek support from other men thus reinforcing her position of need and vulnerability. The daughters in this kind of relationship, in many instances, repeat the mating and fertility experiences of their mothers, thus extending the situation of need and deprivation over the generations.

The question that has emerged from study of this situation has to do with the causal status of the pattern of mating and family formation identified. Is the fact of its constant presence in the cases of intergenerational poverty enough to assign it causal status in regard to intergenerational poverty? Or, is it that there are other variables at work that shape the pattern of mating and fertility that carry greater weight in the explanation of intergenerational poverty?

The fact of Gloria's stark impoverishment in spite of the fact that she belongs to a community that practices a stable monogamy that she has adhered to in her adult life suggests that we need to look elsewhere for an explanation. The answer, perhaps, is to be found in wider society and economy rather than within the social practices of the poor themselves. What Gloria and the women that practice serial monogamy have in common is the fact of their social marginalisation. This is evidenced by their place in a primary labour market within which they face serious disadvantages based on their gender.

The social exclusion experienced by them and their families is also manifest in the low levels of educational attainment. It is also brought out in the disempowering experiences of Gloria in her relations with the social service delivery agencies and the timidity she expresses in interacting with other official agencies in the society. Poor women engage in the practice of negative forms of mating and fertility behaviour because they are poor: it is not their practices of mating and family formation that make them poor. At the same time these practices tend to the reinforcement of their inherited poverty.

The pathos associated with Gloria's existence follows from the multiple layers of social and economic exclusion to which she is subject. She is a woman within a traditionalist social grouping that is itself subject to disadvantage in the society of which it is a part. To these two layers of exclusion must be added three more. The fact of being of mixed racial heritage, the fact that her family of origin was dysfunctional and the fact that the family was poor.

## 9.4 CASE STUDY 3: ROXANN – FORTY-FIVE YEAR OLD PROFESSIONAL CARIB MOTHER OF TWO CHILDREN

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**Main Themes – Family Stability, Education and Mobility, Cultural Affirmation and Social Capital.**

The next case study introduces variation into the ‘dependent variable’ of socioeconomic status in order to better understand those factors with which it is integrally linked. The case studies examined so far have highlighted factors such as the intergenerational nature of poverty and its seemingly close association with social and economic exclusion in the forms of low levels of income, an absence of wealth generating assets, low levels of educational attainment, high incidence of family breakdown, precocious sexuality and repeated child bearing on the part of women.

In the case of the person from the Carib community note was also made of an apparent circumscribed interaction with the social world outside of the Carib community and an attendant diffidence in dealing with formal authority structures and institutions. If the factors mentioned have some causal bearing on the cases of extreme poverty that we have been examining then it stands to reason that their absence should be associated with the non occurrence of extreme poverty.

The following case study is therefore very instructive in terms of our understanding of the process associated with the outcome of extreme poverty that we have been trying to understand. This is more so the case because the individual concerned had a biological mother that had all of the characteristics associated with extreme poverty outcomes in her infancy. After this these conditions were removed, the case study points to the outcomes associated with the removal of these factors. The non-poor status of the respondent is affirmed by the fact of her professional qualifications, her ownership of substantial dwelling, motor vehicles and her family’s access to land.

The case study is also important because it provides an eloquent account of the cultural barriers faced by indigenous people in Dominican society. These though intangible, arguably, contribute to their relatively disadvantaged position in Dominican society. The eloquence of the educated Calinago brings into sharp relief the unspoken, taken for granted cultural milieu within which indigenous people suffer social and economic disadvantage in Dominican society.

Prejudice, it would seem, is an ever present conscious reality to Carib persons more so the poor, uneducated ones. Their disadvantaged position in the society finds response in higher than average rates of social pathologies such as alcoholism and mental depression (see case study). The majority of the members of this community lack the

capability to articulate the nature of their disadvantage to the wider society, for which it is like water to fish. The respondent in this case study has no such inabilities.

### **Circumstances of origin**

Both of Roxann's parents experienced change of socioeconomic status that was to affect her own life experiences in a positive way. She tells her story.

*"My mother had 11 of us, 8 girls and 3 boys...and I am the third. I was born in 1965. My mother was adopted when she was 9 months..from the area, from the same community. At the time..by a Carib chief. He and his wife they had no children. So one day he passed and he saw all these children. Well my grandmother by my mother's side had about 11 children too and these children were steps, one after the other. So he passed and he saw that child and my mother was sickly at the time and the lady (grandmother) said to him, you can take this one. And so he took my mom and brought her to live with them.*

*My father? My father's mom died when he was 7 years and he did not know his father until he was 16, because his father is from another community. And so he was brought up by his aunt who at the time was the post mistress and she had (a) shop. In those days she was considered to be someone of a higher level. She didn't have any children either."*

Roxann goes on to explain that her mother's biological parents were

*"a fisherman and a housewife." They were, "poor people and having a lot of children and so.."*

She explains that the chief was considered to be

*"of a higher level because he had a shop. He later on had a bakery...the only bakery in the community and later on was one of the few persons who did copra and he also had a factory where he made farine and cassava. In those days if you owned a donkey you were considered to be somebody of a higher (status). He was a little wealthier than the others. He had a licensed gun and all of that. And he was.. at the time Dominica was under state rule (colony of UK) and whenever the queen came she would take him to different countries with her, so he was at a higher level. My mom grew up with them. She did not get a very good education because she was sickly when she was younger.*

Roxann says she has lived in her present community all of her life, except for the time she went off to study overseas. She says she also travels as a part of a cultural group,

*"but always lived in this community."*

She studied nursing and describes herself as a social worker.

*"I was born here. I was born just below where I live at present."*

Roxann says her father's father was one of the high ranking families in one of the northern communities, but there was a disconnection between him and his father.

*"yes my father was Carib because of his mother. And he never knew his father until he was 16. So is like he never had contact. His father was non Carib. So he grew up with my grand aunt, his aunt and ahmm they didn't have any children so they were at the higher level having quite a bit of land and shop and being the post mistress of the day and so on...they ended up being at the higher level. He did not get a very good education either because at the time there was only one school and you had to do a lot of work before you went to school and ...and then he and my mother got married.. because they lived not far from one another, in the same community.*

*And then my mother's adopted parents decided that they did not want her to go and live on his property. They would rather cut down some coconut trees and let them build their house. So we ended up living close to my mother's parents...He (mother's adopted father) gave my father portions of land and whatever. And when he died he left most of the land to my father and mother. And my father also inherited from his aunt. So he ended up having quite a bit of land.*

*My father is a very hard worker. He is 75 this year and he might just look younger than you (laughs). Yes he works very hard. Well he had 11 of us and at the time my mother's adopted mother was still alive so she took care of some of us while we were small and my father's (adopted) aunt took care of some of us while we were small." Her mother she explains did not have any children for anyone beside her father. " All of us same mother, same father."*

One major difference between Roxann and the cases of extreme poverty that we have looked at so far is access to the wealth generating resource of land. This resource has proved very important in the breaking of the cycle of poverty as it obtains between generations. In the case of Roxann's family its role in this regard seems indisputable. In the Carib territory you do not own land, it is communally owned, but you have access and as long as you work it nobody can take it from you. The only difference is that you cannot take it to the bank as collateral. But as long as you have it then you pass it on to your children and grandchildren and so on.

*So he (adopted grandfather) had quite a bit of land and my father's family also had quite a bit of land so...we ended up having quite a bit of land."*

In situations such as these an absence of cash in hand does not equate with hunger. Furthermore, access to cultivable land would invariably mean that cash-less-ness was likely to be a temporary situation.

Land therefore provided the basis for material well-being. It also provided the material basis for stable family setting within which children could be provided with the love and discipline necessary for the development of their potential as human beings.

Roxann continues,

*“growing up with them we always had to work hard. We always had to work hard in that we had to go to the garden. Even at primary school as very little children, Daddy would go to the garden very early in the morning and we would have to go to the river, do our house chores. Go to the river for water, come back sweep our yard, do what ever had to be done and ahmm we would have to take Daddy’s breakfast. Bring it to the garden for him and then go to school. And then when we came, during lunch time we would come home for our lunch and if there was no water we would have to go to the river for water. We would still have to eat our lunch and make sure that we are at school on time. When we come in the afternoon we would have home chores to do.*

*On banana days, my father grew bananas, we would have to go and after school carry water from the river to the garden where he had the bananas because at that time they were cutting the banana dry leaves and we had to wet it because that was the cushion for the bananas. We had to carry enough water to full a drum or to halve a drum so we were involved in all the work that had to be done. Some of us, the bigger ones would have to take care of the children while mummy go and do the bananas the next day and things like that. It was really tough.*

*Lunch money? We had to come home for our lunch. Food? My father always grow his food, up till now..I don’t have to buy food. He would grow food and whatever monies he made he would buy meat in the shop or there was a small bay just below our house and my father would go to the bay and most times he would come home with more fish than the fishermen had because he would either bring a drink for them or he had the money and he would buy fish. So we always had meat to eat with the food, or fish to eat with the food (that he planted). So taking care of that was ok.*

*Clothing? We had an aunt who lived outside of the territory. She is not Carib and she would send some clothes for us sometime, when there is a feast, confirmation or first communion we would get our new clothes, but it was seldom that we would get new clothes.*

## **Education**

Unlike in the case studies of extreme poverty that have been examined, Roxann’s family had the where-it-all to provide food and the other resources necessary to attend school on a regular basis. She and her siblings were also instilled with values that promoted education and its role in life as a transformative entity.

Roxann continues,

*"And when it was time for school we would obviously get our school clothes. The smaller ones would get a piece of book the older ones would get a whole exercise book, pencil and so on. But we were always told that we had to work hard.*

*We were always told by our parents that we had to work hard in school. I remember when it was raining and we couldn't go to school my father would make sure that we clean the coffee and that we learn up to our 16 times table. We had to learn more than 12. While others were learning up to 12 we had to learn up to 20 times table, you know? And then he would tell us..because although he didn't achieve any certificates in school but when it comes to knowing all the capitals of the world or whatever, he knew that by his brain, you know and he would pass that on to us.*

*And he always said we have to buy a Student's Companion, the house always had a Student's Companion. A Student's Companion is a student's book, but it has a lot of information, acronyms and synonyms and verbs and adjectives and whatever. And we would always have one at the home. And make sure, when rain falling and you cannot go to school you have lesson to do.. he would not make us do not do anything and ahhm we always knew that we had to go to school and we had to work hard. No matter what, we had to work hard and ahmmm when report time and tests we do my father would have to see papers."*

Her family's social standing also protected Roxann and her siblings from social exclusion in another way that is related to knowledge and education. She is asked where she thinks her father got his attitude towards education and learning from. She thinks then replies,

*"well, I don't know, maybe growing up from my aunt, his aunt, my grandaunt. Because my aunt was the post mistress the principals who came to the Carib territory they would know them and they would interact with them and it would be people like policemen. It would be like more educated people who would have interacted with them. So I guess my father knew that all the community was not educated, but he wanted his children to do better and we would always have to work hard."*

One of the constants that emerge from the study of intergenerational poverty is the effect of social exclusion in the form of the isolation of the poor community from social groupings higher up the social hierarchy. The experience of Roxann's father and the positive attitude towards education that he endowed them with demonstrates the value that can be derived from such interaction.

## **Gender**

Among those suffering from extreme poverty gender tends to act as something of a prism through which the forces of socioeconomic deprivation affects individuals. Both

sexes suffer from educational deprivation. Their experiences in the labour market then separate them with men having an advantage over women in the primary labour market. Women tend to cope with this disadvantage through resort to early and repeated childbearing. Men usually use their advantage to become the fathers of children with multiple partners.

Among the non-poor, the nexus between gender, education, the labour market and the synergies associated with it in the case of the poor ceases to operate. The influence of patriarchy though present is nowhere as deleterious in its effects as in the case of the extreme poor. Roxann in her account points to the effect of gender on her life in the patriarchal community in which she grew up. In comparison with the case studies of the extreme poor it is a muted effect.

She says,

*"I went to primary school in this community. I had to pass Common Entrance. I passed three exams before I could go to secondary school. Because, I passed Common Entrance, the first time when I passed my father was about to send me to secondary school, but then a few of our relatives said if you send your daughters to secondary school in Rouseau most ..they will bring children for you, they will get pregnant. So my father did not send me.*

*The second time I went and I sat exam again with my brother, my brother who has a Masters in ..The two of us went and the two of us passed. He was allocated to go to the grammar school, but I was allocated to go to the ..school because I am a girl. And when I went to register at the ... high school there were a number of students and you had to compete for a place. They gave us a form to fill to see whether I would get a space and my parents never filled the form, but my brother went. But luckily that same year that's when Hurricane Donald passed and there was an exam because they were opening this new school at Cambridge so they had an exam and the principal of the school came to my parents and said they want me to go and sit the exam again. So I went to sit the exam and I came out very high on that exam list and my mother said this time she is going because she already passed two exams and she is not going to school. So this time she is going.*

*And I went to [school named]. It is about 10 miles or so from the Carib territory, or maybe even 12. Its close enough, but we still had to commute everyday or walk everyday and that is the story of my life. I walked to secondary school. And so my brother went to grammar school in town... he had all his books, his rent was paid, he had pocket change, he had snack, everything, well taken care of because he is in Roseau and he is the boy. Now I had to go to that other secondary school and I must have gone to that secondary school with one or two textbooks. And I must have gone with three maybe four up to third or fourth form. They would never buy all of my textbooks because there was never enough money to purchase for the two of us because we were in the same class at the same time. So there was*

*never enough money to purchase for both of us so they would make sure that my brother was properly taken care of and then whatever balance then I would get."*

**Resource availability:**

Although not suffering from extreme poverty, an absence of an abundance of resources showed itself in the life of Roxann and her siblings in a number of ways. One of these was the logistics of attending school on a daily basis. Yet those resources that were available were enough to provide a measure of resilience that allowed for the determination and creativity needed to achieve in spite of these inadequacies.

Roxann continues,

*"Going to secondary school, most times I had to walk because there was no bus to take us from the Carib territory. There was no bus. So for the first 6 months or so that I went to secondary school I would leave here 5 o'clock in the morning. Rain or sun, I had to walk most times with slippers on my feet and a plastic bag with books and whatever. And I would walk all the way to Lynica which is...a long distance. So I would have to walk all the way from 5 o'clock to get to the area to Lynica, which is ahmm if you drive is about 15 minutes, but if you walk is about three quarters of an hour, but I had to get there before 6 because there was a jeep coming from Four Roads which is another community to come and pick us up there to get to school for 8. And after that the two Land Rovers because there were two Land Rovers because you had other students. After that they stopped carrying students we had no vehicle.*

*So we would wake up in the morning and by then it was the second year, my sister then went to secondary school and she happened to be going to that secondary school. So the two of us would wake up in the morning. My father would wake up about.. and we didn't always have bread for breakfast or so..my father would wake up maybe about 3 o'clock in the morning. He would roast breadfruit when is breadfruit season for us, give us a cup of coco tea. We would put our coco tea in our bottle, take our breadfruit and at about 4 o'clock we would leave home to walk to school. By that time we were walking to school there were other students who would maybe sometimes be in front of us already. We would walk to school past all the tracks that we knew.*

*We would remove our shoes ..in our hands and walk to school. And at 1 o'clock we would be running in front of other students to see if we get a ride because at that time you did not have too many vehicles, otherwise we would walk back. Most time we did not have money to buy a snack. I remember vomiting on the road because I was so hungry and having to walk home and when you get home after walking home you still have other home chores, you still have home work to do. We had no electricity at the time it was candles and we had to.. remember tomorrow morning you had to wake up at 3 o'clock; you had to go. Christmas time (end of the year) was the most difficult time because the days are short. So, you have to wake up early to make sure you get to school on time and around Christmas time you have*

*exams, you have to get to school before 8, you know? And we would have to struggle and walk to school. It was really difficult, it was nothing easy to walk to school, all that distance."*

### **Family life: growing up in a stable setting**

Breakdown in family life is one of the features that attend the intergenerational transmission of poverty in the case studies that have been examined. This was related to economic insufficiency. Roxann's experiences provide the counterfactual of a stable family life built on a firm resource base. It demonstrates the importance of love and discipline for the development of the youth in the family. The account provided by Roxann of her family's experiences also seems to belie the suggestion of causality between large family size and the transmission of poverty across the generations that emerged out of the other case studies. In one of the studies the respondent had her children with a number of men and it might be thought that this was the source of the family's problem.

Yet, in the second study the respondent has all but one of her children with one man and they all live in abject poverty. The explanation therefore seems to lie beyond mating pattern (union type) since two markedly different forms were associated with the same outcome of abject poverty. Roxann's mother had 11 children. Life was hard, but all managed to find themselves as adults in a position that represented an improvement on their parent's station in life. One fundamental difference between the three case studies is the fact that one of the families was not nearly subject to the extent of social and economic exclusion of the others. Roxann's account of growing up with her family provides much insight into the ways in which this made a difference.

Roxann explains that she was older than most of her siblings. Her eldest brother she says was

*"a big man already. He had left school, he wasn't going to secondary school, he had left primary school. He had gone to Guadeloupe to see if he could work and do something for himself. My sister who was before me, when she was 16 years old hurricane Donald passed and a family, who used to live not far from us, their children were overseas so they came down and saw the conditions so they took my sister with them to live with them.*

*So I was like the biggest person in the house so I had to go to garden on Saturday when other children who were around would be going to the river to wash and stuff I had to go to garden which is .. which is right behind me here which is a very steep hill that we have to climb. Me and the other sister who was going to secondary school. We would go early morning, Daddy would go to his garden and we would bring breakfast for him. He would have our load ready for us and we would pick up our load and come up the hill. And now we joke about it in that when we see that big hill and the load daddy give us we used to take out some dasheen and we would throw it down in the valley because daddy don't*

*know. When we reach home the two of us together he would say oh what a little bit of dasheen, but daddy don't know. So we take out a few and we throw it in the valley and we take the rest and we reach home.*

*When we reach home about 1 o'clock all the children already come from the river with their clothes dry. That is the time we now have to take our basin with our dirty clothes and then we heading to the river. And when we get to the river mummy used to say make sure all you wash fast because all you have to come home and sweep the yard. That's one thing with us, our yard was always clean and we the girls had competition for flower beds in the yard; which bed was better or whatever. That too motivated us quite a bit. And we would have to go back to the river for water on a Saturday afternoon and do all of that. We just had a lot of work to do. Everything was us. Mummy she would have a smaller child and she would have to take care of it and we would have to do the cooking and all of that."*

Roxann continues,

*"It was nothing easy, but in the end we decided we were going to secondary school and come what may we have to learn. We were determined to learn. We said no matter what we have to get out of that life. We have to live a better life, you know? And so we decided that from that time no matter what we going to struggle, but we going to work hard. And my brother in town, although he was taken care of, he too decided, hey we have to work hard because those conditions we have to get out of it. We went secondary school. I got 5 O levels, my brother got 6 and then my other sister who came out after me I think she got 5. And the same year we graduated from secondary school. We left school and we were around and ahmmm...there was 6<sup>th</sup> form, but we couldn't go to 6<sup>th</sup> form where we getting money to go to 6<sup>th</sup> form?*

*And there were all the other children, you know the others were coming up and they were doing well too. Most of my father's children went to secondary school, even if he is a poor man now, but ..we struggled, we struggled. We didn't have all that we didn't have all that we needed to go to secondary school, but at least he ensured that all those who wanted to go to secondary school went. Its just me that wasn't fortunate to go the first time. I always tell him, daddy if you had sent me the first time then you wouldn't have to buy books for Junior(younger brother) because .. so it worked out."*

### **Young Adulthood:**

The sacrifices made to acquire education begin to pay off as Roxann enters young adulthood. The exclusionary processes in the form of the labour market and culture that would have by now harnessed and circumscribed the life of her less well off Carib sisters hold no sway over the life of Roxann. In a situation of social and economic exclusion indigenous culture becomes one more barrier to progress in life. In Roxann's

case, she has certified herself to enter the secondary labour market. In spite of obstacles and those factors that make the labour market far from perfect she makes her way.

Roxann continues her story.

*"Anyway, we graduated in June. In September a new teacher came to the primary school and he came home and asked us whether we wanted to be teachers. And I said, I don't want to be a teacher. I never wanted to be a teacher up till this day, I never wanted to be a teacher. I said no I don't have the patience to teach I would rather stay home and help mummy. I am not good at teaching. But my brother went. My brother became a teacher and that same year Save the Children Foundation was here they had an opening for a cultural person, but they wanted a woman so I applied, I applied for that position and I came out first. I came out first when I went for that interview. But, I was not given the job. I was not given the job simply because the director did not know me. The coordinator had promised somebody else the job and so he had excuses for the other persons not to get the job and so I didn't get the job.*

*That happened around October and then I went for an interview to become the secretary of the Carib council in December. And then I got that job in January. There were 9 or 10 of us. I came out first in the interview and got that job. At that time the salary was EC\$275, which was little money. My brother who was a teacher was getting \$6 to \$700 because he had just entered, but I didn't mind. I didn't want to be a teacher..I stayed working with the Carib Council and I met a lot of people and I just became a social worker ahmm joined the Garifuna cultural group."*

The indigenous culture that is described by one of the respondents in strongly negative terms becomes a means of making a distinctive entry into the wider world for Roxann.

She continues,

*"At that time Garifuna was really, really international so I went to England with them. In fact they were behind me to join them and I joined the Garifuna cultural group. It is an indigenous group. We do indigenous dances and the aim is really to revive and maintain the Carib culture. So we do singing and dancing and so on. A lot of people were joining the group where we had quite a number of mentors for it. We had Dr...who was the Carib Territory's first doctor. We had .. the Carib Territory's first priest. We had a number of teachers who came out of that group and so I joined the group and ahmm went to England, traveled to Canada and went several places. I started representing the group..as a young person I started representing the group when we went to indigenous conferences and so I would be the one on the group to speak on behalf of the women and stuff.*

*The Carib Council started getting exposure, going down to functions, going down to seminars and so on. That motivated me to stay, even if the salary was small. And so I*

*worked with them for a number of years. We did a number of self help projects.. we worked on the Kaddie, which was the traditional house there. We did it voluntarily, but we were just motivated to do it. I was in church I was in the Catholic youth movement. Since I was thirteen going to school I joined the Catholic youth movement and we were planting crops, potatoes, bananas, plantain to help other children who were less fortunate than myself, although I was less fortunate, but we were helping others and I just got involved in everything."*

Success for Roxann begets further success and access to resources.

*"I was in ..sports and I would just be involved in everything and ahmm I moved on after a while, while I was at the Carib Council's office ahhm it happened simultaneously ahhm a lecturer from ...international institute came down to do a workshop in Dominica and it just happened that one of the gentlemen from the Save the Children Foundation brought him to the Council's office and we sat down and we spoke and he said to me, I am going to leave a brochure with you. Would you like to continue your studies and I said yes and he said if you are interested and you apply I will try to see how you can get a scholarship or a bursary. I said ok., so I took the bursar slip and I applied. I got my references and stuff and I sent it.*

*And, the same year there was an opening for a community development assistant for the Carib Territory. I saw the advertisement and I applied. They were giving them \$100,000 to do a couple projects in the Carib territories, but more to do community organization and I felt that I could do it. It was a challenge, but I felt that I could take it up. So I applied. There were three of us from the Carib territory; the present Carib Chief was one of and there was another gentleman- he is out of state now- and I came out first in the interview and got that job.*

### **Social networks and access to resources**

*So the same time I got the job was the same time I was supposed to go and study so it was Ministry of ..I was employed to and they say you not working for a year we can't give you study leave you will have to postpone your scholarship and stuff (hisses). I say, boy, I am getting this scholarship you know. As an indigenous woman and I think even if I don't have a year working with you there is something that could be done because there are no social workers working in the Carib territory and there are so many social problems. At the time it was the Freedom Party that was in and our parliamentary representative was with the Freedom Party ...but I had not supported them in the elections so I didn't expect them to do anything for me.*

*I went and finally spoke to the local government commissioner and he said to me you have to postpone your scholarship and whatever, whatever. The person I am presently working with, he is my director, he was the acting assistant local government commissioner he said to me I think you should resign if you want to go and do your*

*studies. When you come back you will find something to do. It's your choice but my advice to you is to resign and go and do what you want to do. And I went back to the commissioner's office and I said to him, you know what I am going to resign. I am going to resign and go and do my studies. And he said, no. no, no, ..because it's the Carib territory and people will always talk about...he said I am going to call the Permanent Secretary. He called and a couple of months after he said to me we will give you leave without pay to go and study. So I said no problem.*

*[So] I had to go and study, but I didn't have any money. I was getting the scholarship. They were paying for my boarding, they were paying for my tuition, but I had to pay for my passage and I had to pay for my personal expenses and I didn't have any money. I had just gotten married, in fact, I had just gotten married. So I said to them..I called Leroy Edwards, who was the person who had introduced the man from the institute to me. I said to them I have to leave. I have made a booking with the airline for the day after, that was the Friday, school was opening the Monday. I said to him I have to go to Trinidad. I made a booking but I don't have any money to book my passage so I don't think I will go. He said to me, yes, you getting on that plane tomorrow and you going, no matter what. So I said to him, but I don't have money to pay my ..he said yes, I calling you back in a little while, you have to get on that plane and you have to go. I waited for him a little while and he said go down to the office of the Dominica ..Association and speak to Mr. Smith. He will give you some money to pay your passage. So I said, that will pay my passage, but what about my personal expenses?*

*So I went down, Morgan Shane who is now our parliamentary representative, he was going to fill my position, was with me. We went to the office. We stayed there for a while and the gentleman came out and he said, I called LIAT's office to pay for you, but when I checked the cheque book that we were going to borrow you the money from there was no cheque signed by the persons who were supposed to sign the cheques (laughs). He says, anyway, I do not know you but once Leroy Edwards says to borrow you the money I am going to borrow you the money. And when you come back...at that time Leroy had applied for two scholarships to pay my personal expenses for me and my passage for me.*

*He said if you do not get any money it will be like a loan without any interest. And he made out a cheque to LIAT and I brought it to LIAT and they gave me my itinerary and I gave it to Mr. Shane who was staying in town. At the time you didn't have many vehicles going to town so there was the last bus coming up and Mr. Shane said to me Roxanne, go on the bus (back home) because a vehicle is supposed to be coming for me and I am suppose to remain in town to do my business so I will remain in town and do the whatever..he will go to Cable and Wireless and fax my itinerary to the university so they can come and collect you. And that was it. I came home and next morning I packed my things and I said goodbye to my husband and my little boy and then I went to Canada, with no money. I left Dominica with no money. I went ..my husband has a sister in Canada so I went and I stayed with her the Saturday night and the Sunday morning*

*she gave me Cd\$15 and I went to university. Took the flight from Montreal to Toronto and I went to university with no money.*

*When I got there.. well they came and got us and everything..they use to give us CD\$25 cook our meals on the weekend. When I got there, there were two other Dominicans, I didn't know them, but I got to know them and there was one Grenadian and one Jamaican. And the five of us teamed up together, the Jamaican wasn't eating any meat so we would buy vegetables for him and we would cook one meal on Saturday and one meal on Sunday and CD\$10 was enough for us. We would put together CD\$10 the five of us, \$50 and we would go and buy all our food for the week end. And we were doing grocery pool.*

*And the women, three of us we cooked for the group and I was using CD\$15 to buy my personal things. And later on the African students who were there were not able to comb their hair, plait their hair, but I could plait their hair. I don't know I had learnt it from maybe going and spending weekends with friends, with my aunt and so I had learnt to plait hair and so I would plait their hair for them. On a Saturday morning, three, four or five of them would come and say Roxann, I washed my hair I want you to comb it for me. And I would comb it for them for a week. And my lunch on a Saturday would be made by them. They would call and say your lunch is ready or your breakfast is ready. So I didn't have to spend any money on a week end.*

*That is how I happen to keep my money, CD\$25 that they would give me every weekend; I would have it because I was helping the others. And amm..the course ended in November. At the end of October my husband called and said that I had gotten assistance from both scholarships that had applied for. Well I said, the course ends at the end of November I don't even need any money. The course was for six months- it's a year course forced into six months because of the African and Caribbean students to help them with the weather and whatever. And so I tell him I really don't need the money I coming home just now. I already done past the hardship. ..When I came home I had a little savings on my bank book and I went back to work and continued to work. I decided well that me I not looking back. I have struggled, but ..I will continue to struggle, but I have to get out of this situation that I am in."*

## **Moving forward**

Life's circumstances tend to come together to create synergies, or combinations that amount to more than the sum total of the parts that make them up. In the case of the very poor, the case studies indicate, these tend to lead to produce a decelerating, retrogressive impact on the lives of the individuals. In the case of the non-poor they tend to work in the other direction.

According to Roxann,

*"Now I got married in 1990. My husband, at the time he was doing bananas. He was doing quite a bit of bananas and he was doing well. We were able to purchase a wooden house for us to live and so. And then we had our son and I left and went to study, Canada in 1993. And when I came back I said we have to put a piece on our house because the little wooden house is now too small. Its only two bedrooms and we have an adopted daughter. That adopted daughter happened to be my brother's child. The same brother that was there. But I had just left school and gotten a job and this girl had got pregnant for him and when the child was a year, exactly a year she left her. And ahmm I wasn't ever here, I was on a tour in Guadeloupe with Garifuna and when I came home my mother said to me go in your working bag she left a letter saying that I should take care of the child as my child and she is going to work and my brother said...I was working and the little money I was working I just decided I would take care of her because she is an innocent child. And so when I met my husband we brought her as our child too. And ahmm we sent her to school and stuff. So we had these two children and we had these two bedrooms.*

*So we decided we were going to put a piece on our house. At the time my husband was selling a lot of bananas so we had cess. Cess is like ahmm in the banana industry they would use some of your money, they would put it aside for you and he was able to get galvanize from that. [He] purchased the galvanize (zinc sheeting) from that for us to cover the roof. And we had taken a loan to plant a portion of bananas, but we worked instead, planted the bananas on our own, cause they would give you money prepare the land, dig the holes and plant the material. So we did that my husband and a friend of his they pulled together and my husband worked for the fellow and the fellow worked for him so they worked as a team. And so when they dug the holes we ourselves, I would go and carry the plant and stuff. So we were able to save and put that \$5000 on our bank account. So we used that money now to help us to put the piece on our house. It was a wooden house, but with a concrete foundation. All the time my husband kept saying, boy, we have to build a whole house, we have to build a whole house. That was always his dream to build a whole house.*

*But in 1996 he fell ill. He played a sport for Dominica. He was a very good sportsman. The morning he woke up and he said he wasn't feeling too well and he went to bathe by the sea and he came back and had his breakfast. After he had his breakfast he said boy, he feeling really upset, but he was the captain of the team and he went and he went to play and by the evening he just couldn't do anything for himself. The next morning he woke up he was really, really sick. The following day we took him to a private doctor in town and he said something was wrong with his liver. So I said boy you only have one liver eh. Something was wrong with his liver, they didn't know what so they sent him to the hospital right away. They carried out some tests and they said he had an abscess on his liver. I said lord I hope that thing is not cancerous. Anyway with all our dreams that we had he wanted to do better. He stayed in the hospital for a whole month. A whole month and finally they did surgery to remove the abscess on his liver. They tested it. They said it*

*was not cancerous, it was maybe caused by a parasite or something. And so he could no longer do his bananas, he couldn't go to the garden again.*

*He had to stay two years before he worked and stuff and stuff. And we just had our daughter, she was less than two years old. Anyway I was working so at least we would survive and my father always doing his gardening so whatever food we needed daddy would supply. His friends too chipped in and stuff. At that time (before illness) I used to pay somebody to take care of my daughter because he was out working. So at that time he decided he would stay home and take care of his daughter instead so we wouldn't have to pay somebody. But after the two years he decided he would not go back to work in the garden because every time he worked and stuff it would still be hurting him. He already could do some fishing, so he decided boy he think he going take a career in fishing. I said fishing!! In this Atlantic ocean, no I don't want you do fishing. But it was like his dream that he wanted to fish, you know? He would go on the rocks and in a while he would come back with so much fish, you know? He would dive and whatever."*

It is one of the ironies of social development that the very poor tend to be ignorant of the existence of the programmes that might assist them in life. Furthermore, they oftentimes lack the social skills, knowledge and graces necessary to negotiate these programmes. In a previous case study note was made of the complete ignorance of the respondent regarding the existence of a programme on housing for the very poor, her greatest need at the time. This is not the case with those like Roxann's family who, though not wealthy, have had access to resources and have managed to utilize these in a progressive way. Because of education, knowledge and social networking they are usually able to engage with these programmes with some measure of success.

Roxann continues her story,

*"Finally they came together as a group because they couldn't purchase a boat. They requested some assistance from the Canada Fund for local Initiative. There were about ten of them. They got two Carib wooden dug out boats made. And they started doing very well. They took it as a business in that they decided it is three of us going to fish in the boat, but the boat has an engine and there is the boat. What ever we catch we are sharing it in five. We remove our gas money first so that we can continue fishing. We share whatever else in five. The boat and the engine share we put it in the bank and the three shares we will go home with whatever we make. They started it like that.*

*The following year a hurricane passed. Although they had gone into the bay and pulled up the boat as far as they could, but that hurricane, I don't know, it just took their boats. It took their boats. The one my husband was captaining in and I don't know it was a very lucky boat it was catching a lot of fish, it mash it up. It mash it in pieces. The other one was on the sea floating. So some fellows from Dunswell, that is another community, they saw the boat and it just happened that that fellow had saved the lives of some fishermen. He had met them on the sea and he had brought them home. Those fellows saw the boat*

*and said that looks like the boat that saved our lives. And they went and got the boat and they brought it to Dunswell, but the engine had a problem because all the sea water had gone into it and stuff. We went back to Canada fund and told them what had happened.*

*They were very happy about that project because it was a very good project. In fact that was the only success story that was been spoken about in the Carib territories, for real, and even at the government level. And so my husband decided lets write to the Canada fund. So I went to the Carib chief at the time and I said to him I think we should write to the Canada fund and let us see what happen. Anyway, the lady who is the projects officer came down and she spoke to them and she said I am not promising anything, but I am going to see if I can get one of the fiberglass boats for you guys.*

*And they did get the fiberglass boat and so my husband and a couple of the fellows were fishing in it. (They were) Doing the same thing, saving the boat and the engine money and so on. And then one day he said I think I can make plenty more money if I buy my own boat. And I was like, but we don't have money to buy the boat. And at the time the government had this programme. It was a European Union funded programme, micro enterprise facility where they gave you a percentage off of the loan and you paid the rest. In some cases it was 50% loan, 50% grant.*

*But for you to buy an outboard engine you needed collateral and we did not have that. I was working with government yes, but I was still from the Carib territory, I still don't have the collateral. So, having worked in the district I worked as housing development officer first then I moved up the ladder to become housing development assistant for the entire district which had about 5 or 6 villages. And then I became district housing officer.. so I know a lot of people in the area. So, I called this elderly lady and I said to her, this is what we would like to do, but we don't have the collateral, its not like we are asking you to sell your land title to us or anything. I am willing to put my salary...she said to me, I know you and I know you are a good person. I think you will pay back the loan. And I said to her, of course I will pay back the money. She said ok I will borrow you one of my land title. She had four, she said to me take any one you want. I took the smallest one. I needed 60,000 and the smallest one was worth 90,000. And I got it to the bank and I got a boat and an engine for my husband and he started his business.*

*And, he [started] making thre, four times my salary I making. But I would pay the loan from my thing, but whatever he making comes to the family. He is doing the same thing with the boat and the engine. He continues it as business so whatever happens to the boat or the engine he would be able to continue it. So he has continued with that business. And I worked with Housing up to 2007 and I still work in the Carib territory doing projects and whatever, you know?*

### **Further opportunities**

*I went to Europe in 1999. There was a scholarship to do a postgraduate certificate course. In fact, I was not one of those that was selected. Two other people from my department were selected to go. But when they sent their names up and there qualifications, the university said no. They have to be post graduates. In other words they must have gone to a university already...they didn't have a choice, they had to send me. So that is how I ended up going.....I did a course in rural poverty alleviation a post graduate certificate course. And then I came back and still was working with housing. The course was for three months. But I tell you this thing was so interesting. It had field work, you know. Is like a six months or a year course put in three months. I tell you work, day and night. After that I came back and I applied to do a masters. I did get acceptance, but I never looked for the funding. So I went and did that course and came back to housing. And then there was this programme, the programme that I am working with now.[programme name called.] And so I applied, like everybody else. Well first I was on the board before we got the funding. I was the representative from my area. And we were there, there not knowing if we would get the money because the process is so long and lengthy and so after the new chief came in he decided that he would want to change representatives, so he changed and then when the programme finally came on stream, I applied to be one of the officers. And so, I went to be interviewed, a number of us were to be interviewed and I came out first, I guess I talk a lot. And having done the course, the rural poverty course gave me an edge over some of the other persons. And ahmm, I became an officer. I am seconded to that programme. When it ends in October I will go back to housing, or if government has something else for me to do."*

### **Being Carib in Dominica**

The interview turns to the experience of being Carib in Dominica. Roxann affirms her identity as a Carib woman, but finds it necessary to rationalize her difference. She adds,

*"its (I have) a different mentality. Some people feel that because you are Carib you will always be a poor person and I think no. If you are Carib you are supposed to be a richer person, in other words. Because you have your own culture. You have your own culture that you can use to your advantage that other people cannot use and you can learn the other person's culture because you know it already, you understand? So it gives you an added advantage as a Calinago person."*

Still, as successful as her life has been she cannot escape the cultural and social implications of being Carib. She continues,

*"But, I don't know if is because of colonization or whatever our people's mentality is that because I am a Calinago person I will always be a person who is lesser than somebody else. I am a Calinago woman. I am a Carib and that's why I joined the cultural group because at the time there was very little movement to do any savings of our traditions. Most of our traditions were gone and there was nobody saying, boy whatever is there has to be salvaged. And coming to know that encouraged me to join the cultural group*

*because I felt that we could do the cuisine, we could do the dancing, we could do the songs and whatever else that we could do and that is the reason why I joined the cultural group, you know?"*

The sociological reality of belonging to the grouping of indigenous persons in Dominica is explored further. Roxann is asked if she is aware that there are structural factors that keep people in poverty. She responds,

*"I know, I know."*

Furthermore, there are also cultural factors that work to keep people in poverty. She agrees. It is put to her that the very fact of an individual being different culturally and phenotypically means that they could be subject to discrimination and exclusion. She agrees and proceeds to say,

*"the thing is there is always discrimination wherever you go. Sometimes even in Christianity there is discrimination against Calinago people, but for me I have witnessed discrimination. In the workplace, at school, wherever. When I was going to high school students would tell us about our hair and tell us Carib smelling fresh and whatever. For me? You smelling worse than me! I always had an answer because I was not going to be subjected to what you say or what you do. And I always felt as a Calinago person, even today, even if I know that I am at a different level from the people here, but I know to myself wherever I go I always had to have an added something over somebody else (in order to achieve in life). In other words, if I am going for a job I have to know that there is an added knowledge or skill that I have to have over any ordinary person from any other community that is going for that job." You have to be twice as good? Roxann repeats, " Yes I have to be twice as better because you are Carib and I always say that to my children, allyuh come from the Carib Territory anywhere you go you have to show that you are much better (achievers) because this is always discrimination. But you have to remember I don't have a Godmother or God father who sits in the ministry to say let me give that person a chance. No! the person come from Carib territory [that means] the person is Mr or Ms nobody."*

Roxann becomes animated as she continues the discussion.

*"I would go to an office and I would speak to the receptionist. I would tell them what it is that I came for and stuff and stuff. And they would maybe take me as someone from the [community that used to be inhabited by Carib people, but no longer is so the people have a look of Carib, but are not deemed to be full Caribs] And when I start speaking to them they would think that I am from one of those communities because of the way that I carry myself. Then they say, where are you from and I say the Carib territory and you can actually see their demeanor being changed, you know?"*

What Roxann's interface with mainstream tells us is that in the unspoken discourse of Dominican society on Caribs the presumption is made that they lie at the bottom of the social stratification ladder. So if you have Carib features but are obviously educated or dressed to a certain standard the assumption is made that you have Carib ancestry but you are not a Carib from the Carib territory since such persons are more often than not poor and uneducated. Carib, poor and uneducated have become, in terms of this discourse, items of equivalence.

This discourse has probably become something of a stratification device since it assuages the conscience of those in control of the distribution of resources as to the below par living conditions of this group of persons and serves as justification for awarding the group a smaller share of the resource 'pie' so to speak. Roxann who is ethnically Carib and 75% Carib in terms of her physical ancestry creates something of a cognitive dissonance. We can literally hear the receptionist asking herself, so if you are from the Carib Territory how come you are educated and dressed in this manner? It is as if some natural law has been overturned. Roxann picks up this as 'changed demeanor' on the part of the person with whom she is interacting.<sup>1</sup>

Roxann continues,

*"you see their reaction is different in that if they were speedily going to do something for you they hesitate or whatever. Or, they give you an answer that is not what you are looking for simply because I have said that I come from the Carib territory.*

In other words, the support and facilitation that enables access to resources is lost or diminished to that individual. For lack of facilitation they might not access the resource at all, or it might take them twice as long and make the entire process more costly for them. Speed of response is replaced by hesitancy or incorrect information. It is in this context that the extreme diffidence of the previous respondent from the Carib territory is best understood. Both she and Roxann are Caribs residing in the Carib territory, but her lack of education and self confidence make the barriers of prejudice that Roxann simply walks around overwhelming, virtually impenetrable structures that imprison her and make a mockery of her aspirations for a better life.

It takes all of Roxann's self confidence that she developed from her stable family background, education and exposure to convince others that she is not some category of diminished human being. What of those Caribs that lack these abilities?

Roxann continues,

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<sup>1</sup> This kind of discourse would be common in societies that have historically disadvantaged groups in their midst. The most prominent instance would be that relating to Blacks in the USA in the pre civil rights era where supposed innate characteristics were used to justify discrimination against black people.

*I remember once eh I went in a restaurant and I just sat there and I asked for my meal and I came and I said my prayer, In Dominica, in Roseau, and I started eating, I mean I have travelled the world over so I eat with my knife and my fork like a professional like anybody else. And this man came up to me and said, where you from and I said I am from the Carib territory and he said you don't look, you don't behave like somebody from the Carib territory. I said, people from the Carib territory have special behavior? You know?*

*Even at that level, you know? Sometimes you go out and people ..sometimes UWI would ask me to give a lecture on social problems in the Carib territory and I go and I give a little lecture and people would look at you and say they didn't expect you to be able to deliver something at that level. Everywhere we go is like there is something at the back of our mind that yes I am Calinago and there is a level of discrimination. No matter where you go there is, there is. Some people fail to , some people don't want to acknowledge that it happens, but its happening. For me, I already know its there. I already know its there. I looking forward for it and I have my answer for it already. Sometimes people are not maybe in a professional way like me or are not open and able to defend themselves like me so when they go and they are discriminated [against] they just accept it, you know?"*

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