

IDENTIFICATION OF THE 'POOREST OF THE POOR'
IN NINE VILLAGES IN AGA DIVISION, HANGURANKETA

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The 'poorest of the poor' are often widely scattered in the most remote corners of Sri Lanka. They have hitherto been identified on an 'income' basis or on amount of land held for agricultural production. This monetised system of identification of the poor stems from a tenacious link to a 'GNP model' for development. However, the profound disillusionment with monetary indices to identify the poor, prompted the staff of Redd Barna, Hanguranketa Project to develop an index based on six factors - suitable to a farming community.

The six factors are -- presence of preschool malnutrition, school drop-outs among those between 5 and 15 years, poor education of mothers, poor sanitation facilities, amount of land held and 'special needs' (eg. presence of a pregnant female, a disabled person in the family or a single headed household). All households in the nine villages were surveyed. Points were allocated for each of the six factors, giving more weight for low status of children and mothers. This was a purposive bias, because of the concern of Redd Barna for children and women.

Households scoring high points (usually over 15) were considered the poorest of the poor. These families will receive priority consideration in future budgets.

The method is a further development of the PQLI (Physical Quality of Life Index), which considers health and education services. The new system places more emphasis on the lack of endosomatic development of the poor.