

**POVERTY IN OIC COUNTRIES:
STATUS, DETERMINANTS AND AGENDA FOR ACTION**

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Were poverty a man, I would have killed him
Imam Ali Ibn Aby Taleb

Mass poverty is known to be widely spread in the Islamic world, and many believe that this is not in keeping with the vast resources endowment of the Islamic countries. This mass poverty is manifested in hunger, malnutrition, diseases, illiteracy, the level and quality of consumption of the poor and the broader reality of deprivation. This study proposes an investigation into the status and determinants of poverty in the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) countries, as well as an agenda for action for its alleviation. It tackles the poverty situation and indicators in the OIC countries through two instruments of particular importance. These are poverty lines, which define and measure the poor and non-poor in a country, and poverty indicators which tell about the social conditions and living standards of the poor. The study goes on to deal with the causes of poverty and investigates the poverty profiles which detail the characteristics of the poor and the determinants of poverty, in terms of factors affecting the income and consumption of the poor, their accessibility to physical assets and various basic social needs such as education and health. The study then attempts to outline an agenda for action at the national, and OIC levels in an attempt to alleviate poverty at the OIC community level.

1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a phenomenon that humanity is bound to live with through its history. Distribution of wealth reflects, in the final analysis, the structure of political, economic and social powers, endowment of and access to resources, whether at the national or global levels. Usually, when one talks about poverty the first thing that comes to mind is its economically measurable dimensions, income or consumption poverty or both. Most of the studies about poverty, and most of the policies adopted to alleviate it, rotate, virtually, around this narrow definition. No doubt that low levels of income

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and consumption are basic determinants of poverty. It is, however, not unusual to come across some empirical studies which show that poverty is increasing in a certain country, even though that country may experience an increasing trend in growth and per capita income. This implies that patterns of income distribution, participation in its broader sense and accessibility to physical assets and an equitable distribution of the fruits of development are equally as important as the mere raising of income and consumption.

From a poor man's perspective, poverty is more than just the reflection of the above-mentioned narrow definition. It is a phenomenon reflecting a broader reality of deprivation: economically, socially and politically. In a document presented to the World Summit for Social Development some dimensions of this deprivation included poverty, social inferiority, isolation, physical weakness, vulnerability, powerlessness and humiliation (Chambers, 1995). It is clear then that the reality of poverty is very complex, multi-dimensional and very individualistic in nature. This latter characteristic means that a community of poor people is not coherent in terms of the incidence of poverty or the feelings about it.

This study investigates the status and determinants of poverty in the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) countries, and proposes an agenda for action for its alleviation. Mass poverty is known to be widely spread in the Islamic world, and many believe that this is not in keeping with the vast resources endowment of the Islamic countries. This mass poverty is manifested in hunger, malnutrition, diseases, illiteracy, the low level and quality of consumption of the poor and the broader reality of deprivation mentioned above.

It is clear from the outset that it would be extremely difficult to tackle the problem of poverty from its more comprehensive angle, that is the various forms of deprivation. Furthermore, since poverty, looked at from one angle or another, is a result and manifestation of the complex socio-economic and political structure of a particular country, its status, determinants and the policy measures required to alleviate it would, by definition, differ from one country to another. It is true that poverty has an international dimension, in that millions of people all over the globe are classified as poor and that mass poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America is, partly, a reflection of the unjust international economic order and the structure of international power. Furthermore, the sufferings of millions of people all over the globe from hunger and malnutrition, at a time when colossal resources are available to humanity, should not be tolerated. Hence,

the international community has a responsibility in helping the poor developing countries to overcome this problem. Despite this, the problem remains, essentially, a national one.

Taking into account this complex multi-dimensional nature and reality of poverty, the question then becomes what is the best manner to tackle this problem from an OIC perspective. Due to various known factors and problems, some limiting assumptions need to be made. Analysis will be mainly static shedding light on a given situation where poverty is manifested in low levels of income and consumption, that is to measure poverty in a direct manner. Poverty could also be measured, indirectly, from a social angle manifested in the deprivation of basic needs, such as education and health. Furthermore, and due mainly to data constraints, the macro-economic concept of poverty will be studied. While the macro-economic concept of poverty is concerned with countries, cross-country comparisons, where the average person lives below the minimum subsistence level, the micro-economic concept deals with situations where individuals or households, in a given country, lack the means to satisfy their needs or satisfy them inadequately (Schubert, 1994).

Since, as was mentioned earlier, the determinants of poverty and the policies required to alleviate it would differ from one country to another, reference to some country cases would be needed. This would be attempted to the extent of availability of data and information and specific country case studies.

Although urban poverty, and the expansion of shanty towns around a number of Muslim Capitals creating miserable belts of poverty is becoming a serious problem, yet the bulk of mass poverty in the Islamic countries originates from rural poverty. Even the majority of the urban poor originate from the rural areas. They immigrate to the urban centres hoping for a better life, but they end up, mostly, in having even worse conditions of life. Hence, our concentration in this study would be more on rural poverty, to the extent data availability permits.

One other potential shortcoming lies with the measures and definitions of poverty. In almost all the studies tackling poverty on the global scale, aside from specific case studies, countries are classified, using mostly per capita income measure, as poor or not poor countries, the most popular terms used being above and under the poverty lines. These cross-country

comparisons have the obvious shortcoming of not being able to determine the degree and intensity of poverty in a particular country.

Taking all the above limitations into account, the study will be composed of four sections. The first section will tackle the poverty situation in the OIC countries. The second section will deal with poverty indicators. This situation and poverty indicators will be traced through two instruments of particular importance to discern the poverty situation in a country. These are poverty lines, which define and measure the poor and non-poor in a country, and poverty indicators, which tell about the social conditions and living standards of the poor. The third section will be devoted to the causes and consequences of poverty. It is thus an investigation into the poverty profiles which detail the characteristics of the poor and the determinants of poverty in terms of factors affecting the income and consumption of the poor, their accessibility to physical assets, and various basic social needs such as education and health. The fourth section is an attempt to outline an agenda for action at the national, where some basic policy requirements would be enumerated, and OIC levels in an attempt to alleviate poverty at the OIC community level. The study will then conclude with the summary of findings.

2. POVERTY SITUATION IN THE OIC COUNTRIES: POVERTY INCIDENCES

2.1. Concepts, Definitions and Measurements

Although it may seem simple, the definition and measurement of poverty is rather a complex issue. The most popular and commonly used measure of poverty is the head-count ratio. It measures the proportion of individuals or families, in a country, who are below the poverty line. This measure is, despite its wide usage, criticised on the grounds that it only determines the total number of people who are below the poverty line. It does not tell anything about relative poverty, that is how the individuals studied are poor relative to others in the society, or how the poor became what they are or the extent of their poverty (Kanbur, 1987). More importantly, to determine the level of income which would constitute the poverty line some assumptions in terms of calorie intake and the minimum diet components thereof and income distribution are needed. Hossain and Sen (1992) observed that many studies of rural poverty in Bangladesh have shown discrepancies among the head-count estimates for the same year stemming from differences in those assumptions. Some studies tried to overcome this shortcoming through

measuring poverty by means of a “poverty gap”. This gap refers to the amount of income needed to bring the income of those below the poverty line at least to the poverty line (Schubert, 1994). This concept raises, equally, the problems of determining the *minimum required* income level and finding data about the actual income of the poor in a given country.

Despite these shortcomings, the head-count ratio is practically used in almost any study to determine the number of the poor in a country. The main differences between the various studies stem from the assumptions of the components of the poverty index. Although some studies use household income, ratio of dependency, employment, asset holding and food consumption expenditure level to determine the poverty line, all these are meant to determine whether a household or a family can obtain the minimum calories intake or not. The differences stem mainly, then, from different assumptions regarding the constituents of the minimum diet, the price level in rural and urban areas, and the usage of income distribution data based on household income or per capita income. Furthermore, depending on whether the researcher is more concerned with the impacts of changes in average income or income inequalities (Gini coefficient) on poverty, this would affect the measure (Kakwani, 1993). For practical reasons, and also because of data considerations, the head-count measure is going to be applied in this study. In other words, the poverty lines reported in the data available would be taken as given and, thus, the number of poor in the OIC community would be determined accordingly.

Since the major concern is to reduce or alleviate poverty, that is increasing the welfare of the poor, the definitions of poverty and hence their implications for policies to alleviate poverty are more important than the mere measure of the poverty level. In fact, when a line of poverty is drawn, then a definition of poverty is obtained (Glewwe, 1988).

The various definitions of poverty are meant to determine a welfare indicator to enable the policy makers to draw the line of poverty and take the necessary policy measures depending on which definition is adopted. Various definitions include the adjusted per capita consumption (adjusted by household composition and time horizon), per capita income, household consumption and per capita consumption, per capita food consumption, food ratio (fraction of income spent on food), total calories intake, medical indicators of health and nutritional status and basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, medical, and educational needs (Glewwe, 1988). A major problem inherent in all these definitions and measures is related to the

determination of “*that minimum*” beyond which poverty lines are drawn. There are no criteria here and some sort of value judgement is inevitable. We will not go into this debate. What will be attempted in the subsequent subsection is to study the incidence of poverty in OIC countries and the intensity of the problem, the measure or definition being dependent on the data we could obtain.

2.2. Poverty incidences: Head-count measures

As was mentioned earlier, most of the data available draws some lines to classify the countries either above or under the poverty line. A first instance is then that OIC countries are classified as either poor or not poor. At a more disaggregated level, that is the country level, the number of the poor in that country is determined. Except in specific case studies, data and information is limited to the above. This above and under the line of poverty measure, based on per capita income, does not tell us about the poor people in those Islamic countries that are classified above the poverty line. Hence, figures about the total number of the poor in the Islamic countries are not accurate. Furthermore not all the people in those countries classified as being under the poverty line are poor.

It would seem, then, that the above measures are gross approximations of the reality. More important is that the reality of poverty could be assessed accurately only if very specific case studies are undertaken. Of course, this does not mean that these group level studies are not useful and cannot tell about the poverty in OIC countries, especially that it was already indicated that there is going to be more concentration on the macro-economic concept of poverty because of data limitations.

Poverty in OIC countries is discussed hereafter using the most commonly applied measure, that of per capita GDP. In the first instance, those OIC countries which are classified as poor countries according to their per capita income will be tackled. Then using the head-count ratio as an order of magnitude of the number of the poor and their percentage of the total population in the OIC countries for which data is available would be discussed. It is noteworthy that because of data constraints the countries are not exactly the same in the two cases.

The World Bank has, in its various reports about poverty, established two poverty lines. The upper poverty line is fixed at a per capita GDP of \$ 370 and the lower poverty line is fixed at \$ 275 per capita GDP. A country is classified under the upper poverty line if the per capita GDP is less than \$ 370 and it is classified under the lower poverty line if its per capita GDP is less than \$ 275. This measure, despite its shortcomings, facilitates cross-country comparisons. According to this measure, 14 OIC countries, for which data is available, were reported to be under the poverty line as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Poverty in Selected OIC Countries Measured by Per Capita GDP (\$275-
\$370) in 1990 Figures (in US Dollars)

Countries	1980	1985	1990	1992	1993
Benin	241.6	262.6	239.3	242.7	407.1
Sierra Leone	334.5	262.6	136.7	141.1	162.3
Comoros	325.0	254.4	226.5	218.8	218.8
Pakistan	277.3	308.2	354.6	(405.1)	(405.1)
Gambia	205.9	210.7	218.3	221.3	221.3
Somalia	119.4	111.2	106.1	.82.0..	.82.0..
Burkina Faso	186.3	132.6	286.7	309.4	290.7
Niger	310.0	217.9	206.0	180.6	265.5
Mali	200.4	141.0	307.6	287.9	262.5
Chad	106.0	144.9	142.6	158.0	196.60
Bangladesh	145.2	145.7	197.3	206.5	207.9
Maldives	252.5	(469.7)	(554.2)	(470.0)	(470.0)
Guinea-Bissau	149.6	180.9	197.0	200.7	234.4
Uganda	159.9	162.1	180.8	181.5	172.3

Source: African Development Report, 1994. African Development Bank, Abidjan, 1994 and SESRTCIC databases.

Note: \$ 275 indicates the lower poverty line, while \$ 370 indicates the upper poverty line. Figures in brackets indicate that a country is above the poverty line of \$ 370.

It is disturbing to observe that for many of the countries reported in table 1, the poverty situation, measured in terms of per capita GDP, is either deteriorating or not improving. Excepting Pakistan in 1992 and 1993, and Maldives in 1985, 1990 and 1992 and 1993, per capita GDP in all the remaining countries is below the upper poverty line indicating that they failed to bring their GDP even to the level of the upper poverty line in over a decade, let alone to overpass this threshold. More alarming is the fact that 7 out of the 14 countries reported were below the lower poverty line during the whole period, while 3 countries were below the lower poverty line in three out of the four periods reported. In 1985, 12 out of the 14 countries were below the lower poverty line. This indicates that the poverty situation in the majority of countries reported is very serious, and that there is no indication that the trend is reversing over time. If one takes into account that the income of the poor is usually lower than the average per capita GDP of the country, the situation of the poor in these countries seems to be extremely alarming.

Table 2
Poverty in Selected OIC Countries, 1980-90
(first period) and 1992 (2nd period)

Countries	First Period		Second Period	
	Numbers (mln)	Headcount (%)	Numbers (mln)	Headcount (%)
Afghanistan	9.7	53.0	10.2	61.3
Algeria	5.5	23.0	5.8	23.4
Bangladesh	84.7	78.0	93.2	82.7
Cameroon	4.1	37.0	4.7	36.9
Chad	3.0	54.5	3.2	53.7
Egypt	11.8	23.0	12.6	22.8
Guinea-Bissau*	0.43	48.3	0.46	48.0
Indonesia	45.4	25.0	47.8	25.7
Jordan	0.64	16.0	0.80	16.3
Mali	4.6	54.0	5.3	54.1
Malaysia	2.8	16.2	3.0	16.1
Morocco	8.9	36.9	9.7	37.0
Mauritania*	0.57	32.1	0.64	31.8
Nigeria	40.6	40.0	41.0	40.1
Pakistan	29.8	28.0	35.0	29.4
Senegal*	3.3	49.7	3.6	49.6
Somalia	4.8	60.0	5.6	63.0
Tunisia	1.3	16.5	1.4	16.7
Uganda*	2.1	13.5	4.1	23.1

Source: Human Development Report 1992,1994 (UNDP).

* First period denotes 1985 and 2nd period 1990. Figures for headcount are taken from Ali Abdel Gadir(1995).

In fact, this cross country comparison cannot give us much information with respect to the situation of poverty in a particular country. To overcome this problem, partly, we are going to use the headcount ratio to measure poverty in a given a country. This ratio gives, as explained earlier, the number of the poor, whose income is below the poverty line, as a percentage of the total population in a given country. Table 2 furnishes this information for some OIC countries for which data could be obtained.

As could be seen from Table 2, the total number of the poor in 15 countries (excluding four countries for which the periods are 1985 and 1990) was about 258 million people during the first period (period average) and 283 million in 1992, with an increase of about 9.7%. To this should be added 6.4 million and 8.8 million for the other four countries for which data is reported for 1985 and 1990, respectively. This figure, which is obviously *an order of magnitude only*, represents slightly more than one-fourth of the total Muslim population in the world, although data is reported for only 15 OIC

countries. It is noteworthy that the absolute number of the poor is increasing over the years in all the countries reported. The headcount ratio is alarmingly high in some countries where for about half of the sample group the ratio is more than 40% reaching about 83% in one case. Furthermore, poverty is not only increasing in absolute terms, but also in relative terms which is even more alarming. In fact, in about 12 countries of the sample, the headcount ratio increased and in the remaining countries it is either constant or improved very marginally.

Another observation, from Table 2, is that four countries, namely Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan, account for about 77% of the total number of the poor for the sample countries presented in 1992. These are the most densely populated countries of the group. One of them, Bangladesh, has the highest headcount, and another, Nigeria, figures among the countries with relatively high ratios. Would it be possible to conclude that there is a positive correlation between the population growth and density and the phenomenon of poverty? Although some studies conducted about the Asian poor (Lipton, 1983) have shown that poverty and large-size households go together within a locality, it would be difficult to confirm this finding in this case without detailed case studies like those conducted in the case of the Asian poor.

It would be seen from Table 2 that only Bangladesh, from among the densely populated group, has also the highest proportion of the poor amounting to about 83% of the population in 1992. The three other countries, Nigeria, Pakistan and Indonesia, rank 8th, 12th and 13th, respectively. It is, however, noteworthy that in all these countries, the percentage of the poor in the total population increased during the period under consideration, the increase being relatively significant in Bangladesh and Pakistan, marginal in the case of Indonesia and very marginal in the case of Nigeria. However, looking at the poor in this sample group as a percentage of total population in the countries which are not suffering from population explosion indicates that the demographic factor is only one among various reasons behind poverty. The cases of Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Somalia (Table 2) are very significant in this respect. The high percentage of the poor in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) of this group is understandable being the reflection of the known problems related with the fact of their being LDCs. On the other hand, two oil-producing countries have relatively high percentages, namely Nigeria with a percentage of the poor amounting to 40% and Algeria with 22.4% of the population being considered as poor. Furthermore, the percentage of the poor is relatively high in some middle-income countries, a case in point being Morocco with about 38% of the population being classified as poor. This is a

very mixed picture confirming the fact of the multi-dimensional nature of the poverty problem and that factors behind poverty could be very diverse.

In fact, 12 out of the above sample 19 countries, do not figure among the OIC countries classified as being under the poverty line (see Table 1 and 2). In some of them, such as Nigeria, Morocco, Indonesia, Egypt and Algeria (Table 2), the percentage of poor people in the total population is relatively high. This shows, as was mentioned earlier, that the macro-economic concept of poverty, which we adhered to because of data constraints, would not be sufficient to comprehend the intensity of the poverty problem in OIC countries.

2.3. Depth and intensity of poverty in selected countries

Apart from the head-count ratio, the real intensity and depth of poverty in a particular country or society could better be understood through the poverty gap ratio and income distribution patterns. This is, unfortunately, an area where data is scanty and very difficult to obtain. Published official statistical sources rarely publish such data for obvious reasons. Information could only be obtained from some case studies. Hence, we are going to supplement the scanty available data with the findings of some specific case studies. Although the countries chosen may not be, strictly speaking, representative of the OIC countries, the overall similarity in the economic conditions of the poor LDCs enables one to make some generalisations, albeit with some reservations.

In a study about poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa, Abdel Gadir (1995), estimated the weighted average mean income of the poor in 12 African countries to be \$ 105 in 1990, against a mean income of \$ 292 and a poverty line of \$ 168 in the same year. The group includes four OIC member countries, namely Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal and Uganda where the mean income of the poor is estimated to be \$ 61, \$ 113, \$ 171 and \$ 135 in 1990, respectively. For these same member countries the mean income in 1990 was \$ 230, \$ 408, \$ 557 and \$ 303, while the poverty line was \$ 132, \$ 234, \$ 319 and \$ 174 respectively. The author calculated the poverty-gap on the basis of the equation $P = H \cdot [1 - v/z]$, where P is the poverty-gap, H is the headcount ratio, v the mean income of the poor and z the poverty line. Based on this the author established that the poverty-gap ratio, which defines the aggregate poverty deficit of the poor relative to the poverty line, i.e., that percentage of income required to bring them to the poverty line, was 26.5%, 16.5%, 23% and 5.17% for Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal and Uganda in 1990, respectively. Although at varying degrees, the intensity of poverty in these four OIC sample countries is obvious. Comparing the poverty line to

mean income gives a first approximation of the degree of poverty in these countries. Then comparing the income of the poor to the mean income and the poverty line, and the ensuing poverty-gap, shows the real dimension of the problem. The figures given above are for annual income. When the monthly income is calculated the result is self-explanatory. The monthly income is about \$ 5 in Guinea-Bissau, that would not be sufficient even for a single meal in any of the big cities of the majority of OIC countries.

Another way of looking to the depth of poverty in a community is to study the pattern of income distribution in a country. One of the most used methods to measure income inequality is the well-known graphical device, the Lorenz curve. This curve plots the cumulative percentage of income receiving units, i.e., people (ranked from the poorest and up) against the cumulative percentage of total income which they receive. The 45 degree diagonal shows a perfect distribution of income (see chart 1 where three sample countries are given) and the Lorenz curve illustrates income inequality. The area between the diagonal line and Lorenz curve shows the degree of inequality. In other words the more the Lorenz curve is nearer to the diagonal the more equitable income distribution becomes, and vice versa.

The pattern of income distribution in a number of countries for which data is available for the period 1987-92 is given in Table 3. As would be seen from Table 3, while the share of the top 20 % of the households ranges between 39 % and 59 % of total income, the share of the bottom 20 % of the households ranges between 2 % and 10 % only. In fact, if Bangladesh is excluded, the 20 % bottom group gets less than 10 % of the total income in all the remaining countries. This pattern of income distribution reflects serious social variations and a high concentration of wealth and resources. When this pattern is put in a framework of a poor developing country, the extent of poverty of the lower classes of society could hardly be missed. Compared to the overall world standards in general, and to the developed countries, in particular, these developing countries suffer from low standards of living. When such a situation is compounded by such a pattern of income distribution the magnitude of the problem of poverty could easily be seen.

Table 3
Percentage share of households in total income 1987-92

Countries	Share of top 20% of households	Share of bottom 20% of households	Share of bottom 40% of households
Bangladesh	39.0	10.0	23.0
Guinea-Bissau	59.0	2.0	9.0
Indonesia	42.0	9.0	21.0
Jordan	48.0	7.0	17.0
Morocco	46.0	7.0	17.0

Pakistan	40.0	8.0	21.0
Senegal	59.0	4.0	11.0
Tunisia	46.0	6.0	16.0
Turkey	50.0	5.0	15.0
Uganda	42.0	9.0	

Source: Social Indicators of Development 1994, World Bank.

Chart 1

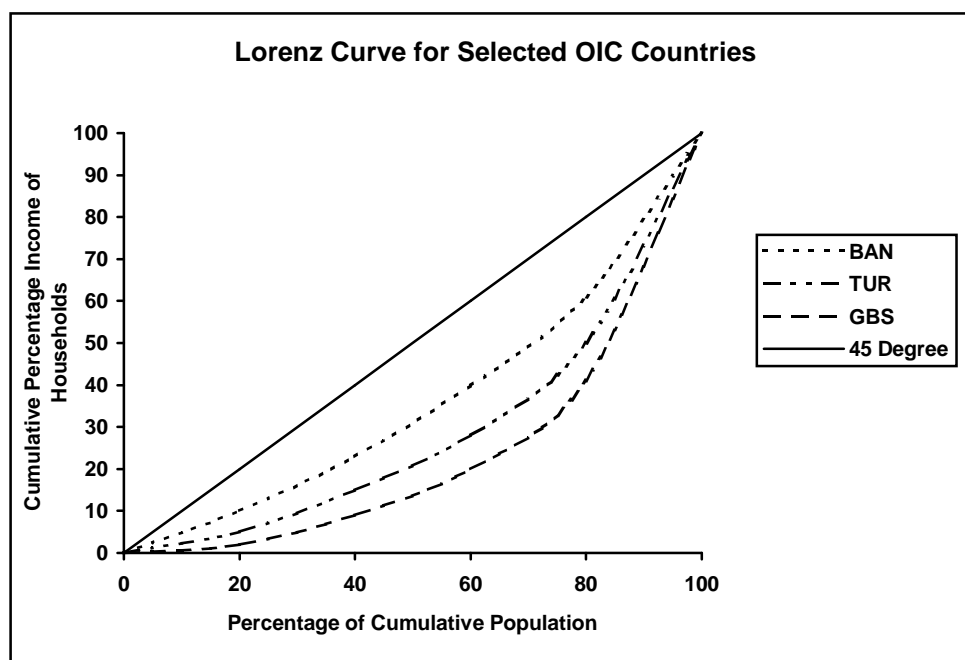


Table 4
Relative income of the top 20 % compared to the bottom 20 % of households, 1987-92

Countries	Ratio
Guinea-Bissau	29.50
Senegal	14.75
Turkey	10.0
Tunisia	7.66
Jordan	6.86
Morocco	6.57
Pakistan	5.0
Indonesia	4.66
Uganda	4.66
Bangladesh	3.90

Source: Computed from Table 3 above.

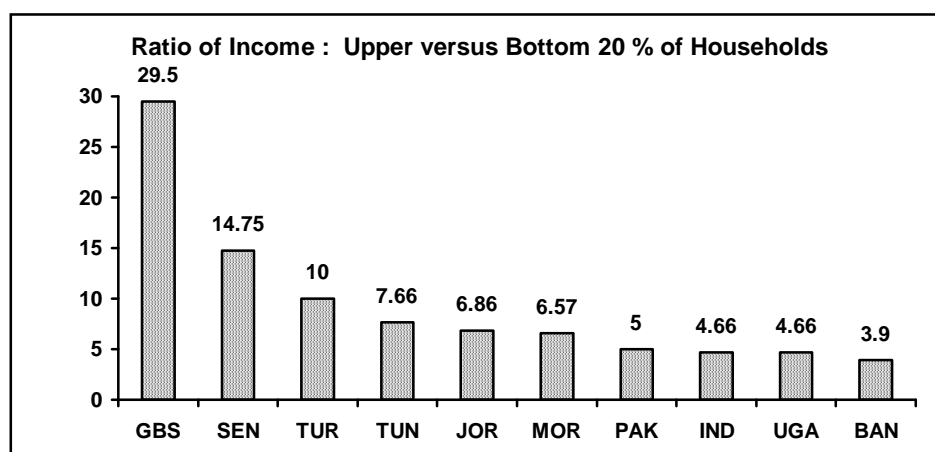
N.B. The ratio shows how many times the top 20 % receive of the total income as compared to the bottom 20 % in a country.

The degree of concentration of wealth, reflected by the pattern of income distribution, becomes more transparent when the data in Table 4 is studied. The data was computed from table 3 above to determine how many folds the

income of the top 20 % households is greater than that of the bottom 20 % income receivers.

It would be seen from Table 4 and Chart 2 that, at least in one case, the top 20 % households earned almost thirty times the bottom 20 % of households. In the best situation of the sample countries the top 20 % households earned four times the bottom 20%.

Chart 2



The deteriorating situation of the poor, as evidenced by the declining trend of per capita GDP (Table 1), is coupled with a high degree of income inequality. It is also interesting to note that one country classified as poor and LDC, Guinea-Bissau, has the worst record in terms of income distribution, while one of the poorest countries in the group, and the OIC in general, Bangladesh, has the best record in terms of income distribution.

3. POVERTY INDICATORS

The poverty indicators include the number of people in absolute poverty, GNP per capita, calories intake, kilogram of oil equivalent of energy consumption per capita, infant mortality rate, life expectancy at birth, under five years mortality rate, adult literacy rate, etc. Although some of these variables could be considered as measures of poverty, such as GNP per capita and the calories intake, we will tackle them, analytically, as indicators in the sense that the low levels of these variables, as compared to

international standards, are symptoms and consequences of being poor, whether at the country or individual levels.

Table 5
Poverty Indicators

Indicators	OIC countries*	All developing countries	Least developed countries	Industrial countries	World
People in absolute poverty (millions, 1992)	283	1300			
Energy consumption per capita (kg. of oil equivalent, 1991)	7-241	550	52	4840	1350
Life expectancy at birth (1992)	51	63	50	74.5	65.6
Under five years mortality rate (per 1000 live births, 1992)	250-120	100	160	15	90
Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births, 1992)	164-61	69	112	13	60
Literacy rate (1992)	20-57	69	46	96	65
Calorie intake (1992)	2328	2500		3200	2700
GNP per capita (US\$, 1991)	363	880	240	14920	4160
Annual population growth rate (% , 1960-92)	2.8	2.2	2.6	0.8	1.8

Source: Human Development Report, 1994. UNDP; and World Development Report, 1994. The World Bank.

*N.B. The figures for OIC countries are for the LDCs classified as poor. When the weighted average could not be calculated, a range is given showing the highest and lowest in the group.

The importance of these indicators lies in the fact that they tell about the extent to which the poor have access to and satisfaction of their basic needs. In other words, they shed light on the social conditions and living standards of the poor. Since access to, and satisfaction of, these basic social needs are function of income, overall social standing and the government policy regarding the distribution of these services, and a reflection of the standard of living, a low level of access and satisfaction of these needs could be considered a good indicator of poverty. Table 5 below, summarises the situation of OIC LDCs as compared to the world, the developed and the developing countries.

The data in Table 5 above shows that the Islamic LDCs are far behind in terms of standard of living and satisfaction of basic needs compared even

with the developing countries, let alone the average world standards. Except in the case of calories intake, where the minimum requirement is estimated at 2300 calories per day, they are far behind the world average in all the indicators. The average daily calorie intake indicator should, however, be interpreted with caution because the estimation of requirements and actual intake differ from one source to another depending on the assumption of what constitutes that *critical minimum* of calorie intake. Annex 3 shows that out of the 31 OIC countries reported in 1990, 15 countries show the average daily calorie intake to be less than the minimum requirement of 2300 calories per day. This minimum requirement should be taken with caution, in that it is only an order of magnitude, because the requirement may change from country to country. In three countries the average is just above the bare minimum. Furthermore, these averages do not tell exactly whether the poor in those countries are having this average daily calories intake or not. A different source (Table 6 and Chart 3) gives a rather different picture of requirements and actual intake, where requirements differ from country to country. These variations indicate that this particular indicator, calorie intake, is, despite its importance, a mere order of magnitude. Notwithstanding these differences, many an OIC country suffer from an obvious deficiency in this important indicator.

Table 6
Prevalence of Calorie Deficiency (1988-90)

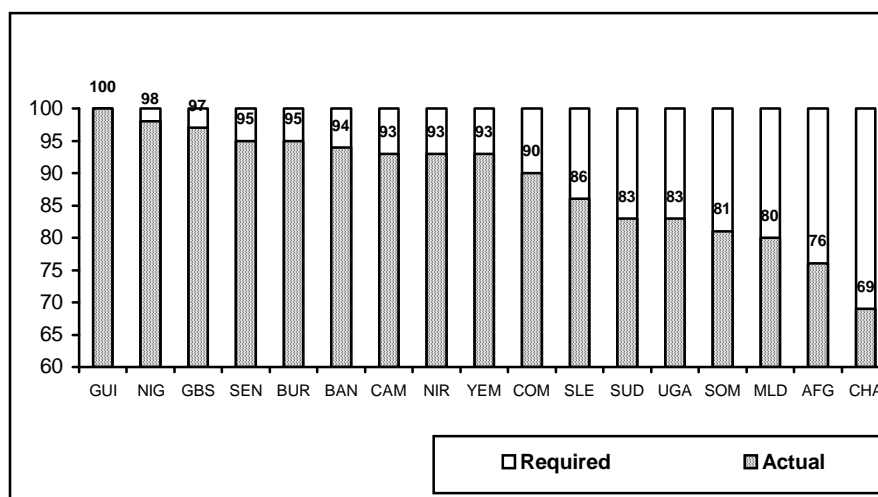
Countries	Av. daily cal. requir	Av.daily cal. intake	Calorie deficiency (-) indicates deficiency	CR (index) As % of requirement
Maldives	3000.0	2400.0	-600.0	80.0
Cameroon	2376.3	2210.0	-166.3	93.0
Nigeria	2365.6	2200.0	-165.6	93.0
Comoros	1955.6	1760.0	-195.6	90.0
Yemen	2397.8	2230.0	-167.8	93.0
Senegal	2442.1	2320.0	-122.1	95.0
Bangladesh	2170.2	2040.0	-130.2	94.0
Sudan	2457.8	2040.0	-417.8	83.0
Uganda	2626.5	2180.0	-446.5	83.0
Guinea-Bissau	2309.3	2240.0	-69.3	97.0
Somalia	2308.6	1870.0	-438.6	81.0
Chad	2521.7	1740.0	-781.7	69.0
Niger	2285.7	2240.0	-45.7	98.0
Sierra Leone	2209.3	1900.0	-309.3	86.0
Afghanistan	2328.9	1770.0	-558.9	76.0
Burkina Faso	2336.8	2220.0	-116.8	95.0
Guinea	2240.0	2240.0	0.0	100.0

Source: Human Development Report 1994, UNDP.

CR: is an index showing the actual calorie intake as % of requirement: (cal.intake/cal.req.)

Calorie deficiency: is equal to average daily calorie intake minus average daily calorie requirement.

Chart 3
Ratio of Actual to Required Calorie Intake in Selected OIC Countries
(1988-90)



The other poverty indicators reported in Table five show that there is still a lot to be hoped for as far as the poor OIC countries are concerned. The percentage of children under five years of age suffering from malnutrition is a good indicator in this respect. The percentage ranges between 66.5 % (Bangladesh) and 30 % (Mauritania) in the OIC LDCs group, Annex.3.

On the other hand, other important indicators are those relating to health, basic sanitation facilities and safe water. Table 6 below gives information on these variables. It would be observed that access to these basic services is, with few exceptions, far from being satisfactory. Again, with few exceptions, the disparity between the rural and the urban population is significant. Furthermore, this disparity reflects the inequality in the distribution of social services, even within the limits of the resources available to various countries. This inequality becomes more serious and alarming if one takes into account that the rural areas are, generally, more populated and have a higher incidence of poverty.

Table 7
Population with Access to Services (%)

	Health		Safe water		Sanitation		Rural-urban disparity in services		
	Rural 1985-93	Urban 1985-93	Rural 1988-93	Urban 1988-93	Rural 1988-93	Urban 1988-93	Health 1985-93	Safe water 1988-93	Sanitation 1988-93
Afghanistan	17	80	19	40	..	13	21	48	..
Bangladesh	..	..	85	82	26	63	..	104	41
Benin	..	..	46	66	31	42	..	70	74
Burkina Faso	48	51	72	51	15	88	94	141	17
Cameroon	39	44	43	57	64	100	89	75	64
Chad	..	64	25	30	..	..	..	83	..
Guinea	70	100	56	50	10	84	70	112	12
Guinea-Bissau	..	..	35	56	32	27	..	63	119
Mali	..	..	38	53	10	81	..	72	12
Mauritania	33	72	65	67	..	34	46	97	..
Niger	30	99	59	60	4	71	30	98	6
Nigeria	62	85	30	81	30	40	73	37	75
Pakistan	35	99	50	85	17	60	35	59	28
Senegal	..	..	26	84	36	85	..	31	42
Sierra Leone	20	90	37	33	49	92	22	112	53
Somalia	15	50	29	50	5	44	30	58	11
Sudan	40	90	43	55	65	89	44	78	73
Uganda	42	99	28	58	52	94	42	48	55
Yemen	32	81	30	61	60	87	40	49	69

Source: Human Development Report 1995, UNDP, 1995.

N.B. Rural-Urban disparity is expressed in relation to the urban average, which is indexed to equal 100. The smaller the figure the bigger the gap, and vice versa. A figure above 100 indicates that the rural average is higher than the urban average.

The lack of basic social services and the impact of poverty on the overall standard of living of the poor could also be traced through other important indicators, such as infant mortality rate, life expectancy, primary enrolment and literacy rates. They give a good clue to the expected degree of access and satisfaction of those basic needs. It would be seen again from Table 5 above (see also Annexes 1 and 2) that the record of the poor in the OIC countries is the worst as compared to that of the developing countries and world averages. Of particular importance in this respect are the under five

years and infant mortality rates. For the first indicator, the mortality rate, ranges between 250-120 per thousand live births for the poor OIC countries, against 160, 100, 90 and 15 for all the LDCs, all the developing countries, the world average and the industrial countries, respectively. For the infant mortality rate the OIC countries' rate ranges between 164-61 against 112, 69, 60 and 13 for all the LDCs, all the developing countries, the world average and the industrial countries, respectively. These rates are significant and important because they are very much associated with poverty and poor living conditions and standards.

The relationship between these social indicators and poverty is rather complex. It is not always easy to determine with certainty whether these indicators are a consequence or a cause of poverty. The emphasis also differs depending on whether cross-country poverty profiles or a single country poverty profile is discussed. This is a very crucial issue since it will have an important bearing on the social policies and the programmes targeted to alleviate poverty, at the national as well as at international levels. Despite these complexities, it would be safe to assume that these indicators are, simultaneously, a consequence and a cause of poverty. The more fundamental questions relate, however, to the reasons why the majority of the population are poor, why do most of the poor have little or virtually no access to these basic social needs and why they are underfed, illiterate, live in unhealthy dwellings, and experience high infant mortality rates and low life expectancy rates. This leads us to the second section, the determinants of poverty.

4. DETERMINANTS OF POVERTY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POOR: A PROFILE

The study of the characteristics of the poor, that is poverty profiles, is an important step to discern the causes and determinants of poverty. Although poverty profiles may differ between countries, and within countries through time, depending on the structural and cultural characteristics of various countries, there seems to be quite a number of similarities in the socio-economic characteristics of the poor in the OIC countries. Various studies conducted about the poverty profiles and characteristics of the poor in different developing countries (Schubert, 1994) have established that:

- (a) Poverty is more extended and people are more affected by poverty in rural than in urban areas.

- (b) Larger families suffer more than smaller ones from severe poverty, and poverty itself is a factor behind larger families--a cause and effect relationship.
- (c) Poor people are generally landless, and, hence, they are mostly agricultural labourers in the rural areas.
- (d) People who are illiterate, have no or little access to education, have low levels of human capital and capacity to work are particularly vulnerable to poverty.
- (e) Poor people are settled, generally, in regions and areas which are not planned and lack the necessary infrastructure and facilities and are, hence, prone to environmental risks and hazards.
- (f) Poor people have a very high propensity to consume food items. Expenditure on food absorbs the greatest portion of a poor family's income.
- (g) Access to and usage of public goods and services are very limited in the case of the poor people. This reflects, to a certain extent, that sense of deprivation to which we referred in the introduction to this study.
- (h) Poor people in the urban areas are mostly employed in difficult, low-paid and socially looked-down upon jobs such as construction workers, street cleaners, etc.
- (i) Poor people lack the ownership of physical and financial assets, and, accordingly, are usually wage earners.
- (j) In many societies, poverty is associated with certain racial or ethnic groups, and in other cases with some marginalised and/or forgotten regions.
- (k) Poverty has some seasonal dimensions in that people get poorer in a cyclical manner. Examples of such situations are crop cycles, before harvesting, and climatic cycles, during drought.

Because of the diversity of poverty situations, a better understanding of the poverty dimension and its underlying causes could be realised if a distinction is made between the *intertemporal* and *cross-sectional*

dimensions of poverty, (El Sherbini, 1986). El Sherbini explains that the intertemporal dimension means that poverty is a function of time. Poverty, and especially rural poverty, is thus linked to time through seasonal variations, cycles and secular trends. In many OIC countries, especially in Africa and Asia, where a country has only one major agricultural product, the adequacy of diets is very much affected by seasonality, where it is much better during and immediately after harvest and deteriorates thereafter. The cyclical dimension is manifested mainly by drought or floods or both, where the impact of cyclical droughts on the economies of some OIC African member countries, and floods on some OIC Asian countries, is well known, leading especially to widespread internal dislocations and migrations and creating inhuman belts of poverty around the big cities. "The secular trend reflects situations of gradual but persistent impoverishment, the results of which become apparent over a relatively longer period. Poverty in these situations is often linked to a marginalisation process which gradually squeezes the rural poor". This process takes various forms which lead eventually to the gradual erosion of the resource base of the poor, such as the gradual deterioration of land quality due to excessive and continuous farming.

The cross-sectional dimension of poverty relates to variations of intergroups within a society, certain groups, regions or localities within a country and regional or world comparisons. Some of the aspects of this cross-sectional dimension of poverty are the lack of participation of the poor in the affairs and development process of their country, the forgotten and marginalised regions, the high cost of purchased food when some subsistence farmers shift from subsistence to cash crop farming (El Sherbini, 1986).

Another dimension, which has impoverished millions of people in many countries, in recent years, is the phenomenon of instability which became alarmingly serious in many Islamic countries, especially in Africa and some Asian countries. Aside from its impacts on the overall economic activity, instability, especially if it is caused by or results from civil wars and domestic clashes, leads to dislocation of people in big numbers. This dislocation is the main cause of internal mass migration and the refugees problem with millions of people leaving their homes, jobs and source of income. Irrespective of where they settle in their countries, or the neighbouring countries, they end up poorer and/or add to the number of the poor in that country. Other important aspects of civil wars and domestic clashes relate to the destruction of the infrastructure of the country, which is

already rudimentary in the poor OIC countries, and loss of lives of the productive manpower. Both of these factors have serious consequences on the development process, and hence on the poverty situation, of these countries.

Case studies about some OIC countries have shown that most of these characteristics are relevant to the poor in the Islamic countries. A study about poverty in Bangladesh, (Zaman, 1995), observed that the majority of the poor people live in rural areas and are landless. On the other hand, the poorest and chronically deficit households are mostly engaged as agricultural wage labourers. Furthermore, the same study observed that while 40 % or more of households suffer from food deficits in the pre-harvest period, the incidence of poverty falls to about 33 % during and after the harvest season. Regarding the environmental aspects of poverty, the study established that the highest incidences of poverty in Bangladesh have been recorded in the flood and drought prone areas of the country. In this respect, a widely-observed phenomenon related to the environment is that poverty is one of the main causes of desertification in many countries. This is mainly caused by the cutting of wood for energy and unorganised pasturing. In both cases, poor people have very little option. Again, education, health and sanitation conditions are the worst among the poor households. Another study, Hossain and Sen, (1992), about the same country confirmed most of the findings of the other study. Other characteristics observed by this study indicated that the income of the poor is not enough to meet poverty line expenditure, that the poor households have a higher child-woman ratio and more children under ten years of age as compared to relatively richer families. Furthermore, the lower income earning capacities are coupled with a heavier burden to meet the household needs of nutrition, health and education. The study further found out that adult illiteracy is extremely high in poor families.

Case studies about Sudan's irrigated schemes revealed that many of the above- mentioned characteristics are valid in the Sudanese case as well. The study of Hassan, Fletcher and Ahmed (1989), devoted to the examination of the pattern of income, saving and capital formation in the irrigated sector of Sudan, the Rahad Scheme, has shown that inequality in access to capital and accumulation of wealth is one of the main reasons of relative poverty in the rural households. The significance of this factor was drawn against a situation where the studied households have equal shares of land and irrigation. The study has shown that "Results obtained from the Lorenz curves and Gini coefficients revealed a *high positive correlation* between *initial wealth* and *current* family income. Richer farmers were observed to

accumulate more wealth and concentrate resources over the year, whereas the poor suffered negative wealth changes on average.” (p. 129) [*italics mine*]. Another study, Hassan and Babu (1991) about the irrigated schemes in Sudan has also shown that the large size of the family, the higher ratio of non-earning dependants, the little access to productive assets and the undiversified income generating activities are expected to increase the probability of poverty.

All the indicators of poverty and characteristics of the poor presented above show that the problem emanates from the fact that large segments of societies have little access to the basic social needs and do not command sufficient material resources to improve their incomes and welfare. Poverty is hence very much associated with deprivation. It would seem immaterial to question whether large segments of societies are poor in the developing countries because they are deprived, or that they are deprived because they are poor. This is rather a tautology.

The reality of poverty is thus a result of a complex mix of economic, social and political factors the interaction of which determines the position of an individual in the social structure of a society. In essence, the distribution of wealth and power is a function of the participatory capacity and chance of an individual in his society. It is then a matter of access to resources which enable an individual to continually improve his standards of living. The extended poverty in the developing countries is then a reflection of inequality in the distribution of wealth and income as well as political power.

Alleviation, and eventual eradication, of poverty is thus a matter of concrete policies and strategies that would aim to address the above-mentioned causes and determinants of poverty. An agenda for action is needed, at the country and OIC levels. This constitutes the subject of the next section.

5. AN AGENDA FOR ACTION

As was mentioned earlier, the problem of poverty is essentially a national one. However, economic cooperation is a main pillar of OIC action as an institution. Since the ultimate aim of this cooperation is the well-being of the individual in OIC countries, the tolerance of this widespread poverty at the OIC community level is simply inconsistent with this ultimate objective. Eradication of poverty should be a major aim of OIC cooperation. If the OIC

community could realise but only this objective, this would be, in our judgement, a major achievement for the Organisation.

However scanty the information in Tables 2 and 3 might be, it revealed two significant signals as to the policies needed to alleviate and eventually eradicate poverty. One signal is that in many OIC countries the majority of the population are poor as manifested by the high head-count ratios, and that poverty is more extended in the rural areas. The second signal is that *inequality* is a fundamental dimension and cause of the widespread poverty. What, then, are the implications of these two facts for the policies needed to address the problem of poverty.

The first implication is that combating poverty should be viewed within the framework of a long-term strategy and development process. Hence, crisis management solutions would only have temporary effects, and targeted programmes to the poor might not be very meaningful in a country where the majority of the population are poor. As Abdel Gadir (1995) points out “perhaps the relevant, and cost-effective, policy to alleviate poverty [in such situations] is one of *reverse targeting* (italics mine). Under such a policy it is the rich who would be the subject of targeting. The objective of policy in this case would be to mobilise the required resources to alleviate or eradicate poverty” (p.19). The second implication is that policies should be directed towards securing *more participation* of the poor in the economic, social and political life of their societies. This, in our opinion, is the only way to reduce inequalities in the long-term.

Because of the widespread poverty in the poor OIC countries, alleviation and eradication of poverty become somewhat synonymous with development itself, with a proviso. The distribution of the fruits of development should be geared in a manner to benefit the poorer and deprived groups of the society. The implementation of development strategies of the majority of the developing countries, including those of OIC, is being undertaken with the help of the international funding institutions, especially the World Bank through structural adjustment programmes (SAP). As is well known, policies of a typical SAP aim mainly to increase aggregate supply and decrease aggregate demand, through certain economic and trade measures with emphasis on withdrawal of subsidies, especially from food and inputs, financial market liberalisation where interest rates are to be determined by market forces to reflect the real opportunity cost of capital, liberal foreign trade regimes, privatisation of public enterprises and rationalisation of price policies of those which remain under public management.

The SAP entails a cost which has to be paid, by a sector and/or certain groups and segments of the society. Views differ on who actually pays this price. Experience has shown, however, that the poor and the lower income groups are those who suffer most from the implementation of the SAP (for a more detailed study of a methodology for analysing the relationship between SAP and poverty see Kanbur, 1987). In fact, most studies in this area argue that positive results are to be expected in the long term. However, due to the sufferings of the masses and political pressures, these SAP are rarely carried on for the long-term. The usual scenario is that SAP is abandoned after a short period leading to further structural problems and the need for even a tougher programme in the next round. Furthermore, SAP rarely combines the two objectives of raising the income of the poor and providing them, simultaneously, with the basic necessary social services. The World Bank itself recognised this shortcoming when it reported in its 1990 World Development Report, which was wholly devoted to poverty, that “In some countries, such as Brazil and Pakistan, growth has raised the income of the poor, but social services have received too little attention. As a result, mortality among children remains unusually high and primary enrolment unusually low, and the poor are not as well equipped as they might be to take advantage of economic opportunities. Some other countries, by contrast, have long stressed the provision of social services, but growth has been too slow.” (p.3). The recognition of these two very interrelated elements of the strategy to alleviate poverty was a main finding of The World Bank’s World Development Report 1990. The report stated that “the evidence ... suggests that rapid and politically sustainable progress on poverty has been achieved by pursuing a strategy that has two equally important elements. The first element is to promote the productive use of the poor man’s most abundant asset: labour. It calls for policies that harness market incentives, social and political institutions, infrastructure, and technology to that end. The second is to provide basic social services to the poor. Primary health care, family planning, nutrition, and primary education are especially important” (p.3).

The experience of many developing countries has, however, shown that SAP, in the manner and doses they are applied, are becoming a vicious circle intensifying the sufferings of the poor at each subsequent stage, even if growth and basic social services could be combined which is rarely the case. It would appear then that if a long-term strategy to alleviate, and eventually eradicate, poverty is to be successful, it has to go beyond this two-legged strategy of increasing the income of the poor through labour-intensive growth and providing basic social services to them. It is in essence a strategy

of sustainable development and livelihood aiming to increase the chances of the poor to more asset acquisition, to more participation in the economic and political lives of their societies, concrete policies to ensure an equitable distribution of income, access to basic social services at the national level, as well as certain measures relating to international economic relations, especially in the areas of foreign trade and development financing.

It must be pointed out that this is not a simple task. In a given situation, the distribution of wealth and political power reflects certain institutional, political and economic balances which are usually in favour of the rich. Somehow, a trade-off between the privileges of the rich and the needs of the poor is obvious. This is, however, a very delicate balance to achieve. Policies which might abruptly erode the privileges of the rich, and those who retain power, would face a considerable resistance greatly reducing their chance of success. All this has also to be tackled within the framework of the known realities of the poor LDCs where enormous aspirations and objectives need to be realised with very limited resources and very complex multidimensional problems. A long-term strategy aiming at an integrated rural development and a more equitable distribution of development fruits would be essential. It is beyond the scope of this paper to detail how these strategic options would be rendered *effectively operational*. What actual policies to be designed and who is going to implement them is a national concern. We are concerned here with the broad outline of a strategy which we think is essential if the problem of poverty is to be tackled in a serious manner. The main features and components of such a strategy, which is mainly meant for the OIC LDCs and those OIC countries classified as being under the poverty line, are summarised below.

Provision of basic social services such as education, health, housing and sanitation facilities. The lack of these services was cited among the most important determinants of poverty. The study about the rural poor in Bangladesh, Hossain and Sen (1992), revealed a very interesting correlation between the provision of these services and the standard of living of the rural poor. The impact of education is verified by the fact that households whose head completes secondary education earn an income which is 37 per cent higher than those households whose head has no formal education. The study found out also that electrification and transport facilities have a very positive impact on the income of the rural poor. The findings indicate that “household income for a village having access to electricity is about 27 per cent higher than for a village with no electricity. The income of non-farm households with electricity increases at 33 per cent and for farm households at 23 per

cent. Poor households in villages with electricity earn an income that is 14 per cent higher than their counterparts in villages with no electricity. A village with efficient transport facilities has an income that is 11 per cent higher than a village with less developed transport network.” (p.13). These are very important differences indicating the significant impacts of the provision of these social services on the standard of living of the rural poor.

A land redistribution policy which would enable the landless agricultural labourers to own their own land would be very helpful, since landlessness has been observed to be one of the important determinants of poverty. Experiences of Japan and the Republic of Korea have shown that large-scale land redistribution played a crucial role in reducing rural poverty (World Bank, 1990). The study about the rural poor in Bangladesh, Hossain and Sen (1992), established that “a doubling of the size of landownership for an average rural household would increase income by 26 per cent. Land rented also increases income, but the increase is 60 per cent lower than that for land owned” (p.13). It must be pointed out, however, that excessive land redistribution alone might in fact adversely affect the overall agricultural development and efficiency if it is not accompanied by supporting measures. Evidence from many developing countries suggest that in the countries where the land tenure system is dominated by fragmented small pieces, the overall production and productivity are low because land fragmentation makes it difficult to introduce improved technologies and production techniques since farm size becomes an important limiting factor. To overcome the problems related to the adverse impacts of land fragmentation, farmers should be encouraged to organise together in the form of co-operatives or other organisational set-ups that would enable them to pool their resources.

An overall redistribution policy through macroeconomic and taxation policies with a view to redistributing income from the rich to the poor. Any policy that does not aim to overcome the observed inequalities in the distribution of income would, at best, tackle the symptoms of poverty without eradicating its root causes.

More chances of participation and access to resources. As was mentioned earlier, poverty from a poor man’s perspective is a deep sense of deprivation, economically, politically and socially. Hence, policies which aim to give more chances of participation, and access to resources to the poor are crucial to any serious efforts to alleviate and eventually eradicate poverty.

Acquisition of assets and *access to agricultural credit* are equally important to enable the rural poor to benefit more efficiently from their most abundant asset: labour. Agricultural credit systems structured along the classical financial criteria of credit-worthiness proved to be ineffective. The farmers do not usually have anything to offer as a collateral and guarantee against the credit they require. Since classical credit institutions do not follow closely the manner in which small farmers use the credits obtained, an important portion of the credit might well be used for daily consumption. The end-result is that defaults accumulate crippling the farmers with debts, intensifying thus their poverty, and depleting credit institutions' resources with the result that less and less credits are given to the small farmers. Specially-designed credit systems, within the framework of an integrated rural development plan, are essential. The credit system should be composed of two elements: long-term credits to enable farmers to acquire assets in the form of agricultural machinery and short-term credits as the working capital to meet the cultivation, post-harvest and harvest expenses. Both should be highly concessional. To overcome the problems related to the inability of small farmers who have nothing to offer as collateral against these credits, some form of cooperative organisation in the name of which these credits are given might be very useful.

The integrated rural development plan should devote important financial outlays to *rural infrastructure*, especially better irrigation systems and roads. The up-grading of the rural infrastructure and services is important not only because of their impact on production and productivity, hence increasing the income of the poor, but because they also facilitate better marketing linkages and sectoral integration with the other sectors of the economy. Furthermore, investment in rural infrastructure helps the creation of non-farm employment opportunities where employment generation is considered as one of the key elements for combating poverty.

Agricultural research and extension services are important factors in gradually introducing improved techniques of production, improved seeds and better farming practices. This is often neglected in many countries, not because there is no awareness of their importance, but because of the mentality of those who are supposed to do these services. These services need to be extended in the field in the poor rural areas. However, university graduate agronomists and high institute technicians prefer to reside in the big cities as bureaucrats than go to the field in the rural areas. This is,

unfortunately, a reflection of the “elite” mentality which is at the root of many problems of the developing countries.

All the above policies and measures have to be undertaken within the framework of a national strategy. The priorities and time-frame assigned to them cannot be generalised. Each country has to work them out for itself. What is important for our purpose here is that, irrespective of the details, the above-mentioned policies and measures are crucial for any serious effort to tackle the extended poverty problem in the OIC countries at the national level.

There remains to be seen what the OIC countries can do, in their cooperative framework, to overcome the problem of poverty in the OIC community. The problem of poverty was given special attention in the recently adopted “Plan of Action to Strengthen Economic and Commercial Cooperation among the Member Countries of the Organisation of Islamic Conference”. In its preamble, the Plan stresses the eradication of poverty as one of its major objectives where it states “Realising food security for and raising the standard of living of the Muslim populations *with special emphasis on the eradication of poverty*, famine and malnutrition in the Islamic world”[italics mine]. In the sectoral objectives and programmes of action, the poverty issue is tackled under the Food, Agriculture and Rural Development sector. The Plan identifies widespread and mass poverty as one of the major problems and issues in this area. One of the major objectives in the Food and Agricultural sector is to “*cooperate to help reduce and eventually eradicate mass rural poverty...*” The Plan identifies certain programmes of action to realise the objectives of the Agricultural sector, including eradication of poverty. These programmes pertain to promoting and expanding cooperation in the area of agricultural research, developing modalities of cooperation to enhance food security, establishing Early Warning Systems, identifying and implementing joint ventures, promoting investment in rural infrastructure and improving the functioning of the overall market systems.

The programmes of the agricultural sector in the Plan of Action would contribute to the alleviation of poverty in the long run if they are realised. However, the experience gained so far from OIC economic cooperation activities shows that realisation of concrete projects takes quite a long time. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the reasons behind this state of affairs. Notwithstanding the possibilities of the realisation of the objectives of the Plan of Action in the long term, some special measures at the bilateral

level could contribute positively to the alleviation of poverty in, at least, those OIC countries facing acute incidences of poverty.

One modality in this respect could be through providing financial assistance to those poor Islamic countries directly linked to projects that are specifically aimed at rural development. In this respect, involvement of the donor countries in the execution of these projects should somehow be secured, to ensure that such assistance may not be diverted to other purposes. Many would say that this conditionality may interfere with the sovereignty of the recipient countries. However, since poverty is a major problem facing many OIC countries and since national efforts need to be supplemented by external assistance, some trade-off is essential. This trade-off does not mean, *a priori*, foregoing national sovereignty, since this involvement could be agreed upon mutually. It is a matter of understanding between the donor and recipient countries to ensure that funds provided should strictly be used for their intended purpose.

Another important source of funds that could help in alleviating poverty is the *Zakat* money. It is beyond the scope of this paper to give a detailed account of this mechanism and how it could exactly be geared towards this purpose. This by itself would require an independent research paper. One major problem is that this source is individualistic in nature in almost all the Islamic countries. In other words, except in some very few cases, it is not institutionalised. This implies that official intervention to redirect these funds to the poor Islamic countries would, practically, be impossible to achieve. There is, however, a good chance of success if these funds could be channelled through Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). This would nevertheless require a lot of investigation and research into the real feasibility of this modality. Of special importance in this regard are the mechanisms and modalities of collecting these funds by the NGOs at the national level. There is also the important issue relating to the extent and role of the recipient countries' NGOs, especially with regard to the uses of these funds. One crucial consideration in this respect is the necessity to direct funds to small-scale projects which contribute to the increasing of income of the poor on a permanent basis. All these are very complex issues which may give the impression that this might be impossible to realise. However, if one takes into account that these *Zakat* funds are sure to represent billions of dollars, although no concrete estimation is available, then it becomes evident that this a source which needs to be seriously considered and investigated.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has shown that the reality of poverty in the OIC countries might well be far beyond the order of magnitude which was given in this paper, because this is an area where reliable information is very difficult to obtain, and there are quite a lot of differences with respect to the measurement and definitions of poverty. Furthermore, most of the data and literature concentrate on those countries which have a per capita income below the poverty line. Seldom any reference is made to the poor in those countries which are above the poverty line, though there may be quite a number of poor people in those countries.

It was also shown that the reality of poverty is far more than the mere low level of income and consumption and that it is a multidimensional complex problem manifested by economic, social and political deprivation. On the other hand, poverty is essentially very individualistic in nature and, hence, it is basically a national issue and problem. The basic solutions to this problem should be designed and implemented nationally. Yet, co-operation with the poor countries at the OIC and international levels to help them find lasting solutions to this problem is essential. Assistance from the OIC community is particularly important not only because co-operation is the pillar of OIC's action and activities, but also because solidarity is a fundamental principle of Islam, the *raison d'être* of the OIC itself.

Combating poverty should be viewed within the framework of a long-term strategy and development process. Hence, crisis management solutions would only have temporary effects, and targeted programmes to the poor might not be very meaningful in a country where the majority of the population are poor, which actually is the case of those OIC countries classified as poor.

We have suggested a number of policies which we think should, at least, constitute the basic elements of this long-term strategy, especially for OIC LDCs. These policies should be directed towards securing more participation of the poor in both the economic, social and political life of their societies. Securing this participation is very essential if the apparent inequalities in income distribution, one of the basic causes of poverty, are to be reduced in the long term.

Finally we would like to reiterate that if the problem of poverty is not reconsidered with a new vision, whatever efforts are made would only treat

the symptoms, not the ailment itself. *The central orbit of this new vision is to tackle poverty from a poor man's perspective where he suffers a strong feeling of deprivation at all levels.* As was rightly stated by Chambers (1995) "In its concern with poverty and employment, the World Summit for Social Development may be in danger of plodding in worthy but well-worn ruts which lead nowhere new. The challenge is to go beyond the normal agenda: beyond poverty to well-being, and beyond employment to sustainable livelihoods. It is to explore the new paradigm, to embrace the new professionalism, and to concern itself with whose reality counts....To make things better for the poor, it will have to question conventional concepts of development; to challenge "us" to change, personally, professionally and institutionally; and to change the paradigm of the development enterprise. If the poor and weak are not to see the Summit as a celebration of hypocrisy, signifying not sustainable well-being for them, but sustainable privilege for us, the key is to enable them to express their reality, to put that reality first, and to make it count. To do that demands altruism, insight, vision and guts" (page 28). **Imam Ali Ibn Aby Taleb** was a real man of vision when he stated sixteen centuries ago that *"WERE POVERTY A MAN I WOULD HAVE KILLED HIM"*.

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**ANNEX 1. TRENDS IN SOCIAL INDICATORS IN SELECTED OIC
COUNTRIES Life expectancy at birth (years)**

Countries	Females				Males		
	1980	1990	1992		1980	1990	1992
Afghanistan	37.3	42.0			36.6	41.0	
Albania		75.0	75.0		70.0	70.0	70.0
Algeria		66.1	68.0		56.0	65.0	67.0
Bahrain	68.1	69.4			64.1	66.8	
Bangladesh		51.5	56.0		46.0	52.0	55.0
Benin	45.6	47.6	52.0		42.4	49.0	49.0
Burkina Faso	46.8	48.9	50.0		43.7	45.6	47.0
Cameroon	52.6	54.0	58.0		49.2	51.0	54.0
Chad	44.6	47.1	49.0		41.4	43.9	46.0
Comoros	51.7	54.5	57.0		48.3	53.5	56.0
Djibouti	46.0	48.7	51.0		43.0	45.4	48.0
Egypt		60.3	63.0		56.8	57.8	60.0
Gabon	50.7	53.2	56.0		47.4	49.9	52.0
Gambia	36.5	44.6	47.0		33.5	41.4	44.0
Guinea-Bissau	44.6	43.1	39.0		41.4	39.9	38.0
Guinea	41.8	43.0	44.0		38.7	42.0	44.0
Indonesia		62.0	62.0			58.5	59.0
Iran		66.6	66.0			63.0	65.0
Iraq	63.3	64.8			61.5	63.0	
Jamahiriya	60.0	62.5	66.0		56.6	59.1	63.0
Jordan	71.0	67.8	72.0		64.6	64.2	68.0
Kuwait	73.7	75.4			69.6	71.2	
Lebanon	67.0	67.0			63.1	63.1	
Mauritania	45.6	47.6	50.0		42.4	44.4	46.0
Mali	43.8	46.6	50.0		40.6	44.4	47.0
Malaysia		72.0	73.0			68.0	69.0
Morocco	60.0	62.5	65.0		56.6	59.1	62.0
Nigeria	50.2	52.2	54.0		46.9	48.8	50.0
Niger	44.1	46.1	48.0		40.9	42.9	44.0
Oman	53.7	65.8	72.0		51.0	62.2	68.0
Pakistan		55.0	59.0			56.0	59.0
Qatar	69.8	71.8			65.4	66.9	
Saudi Arabia	62.7	65.2	71.0		59.2	61.7	68.0
Senegal	44.9	48.3	50.0		41.7	46.3	48.0
Sierra Leone	35.5	42.6	45.0		32.5	39.4	41.0
Somalia	42.5	46.6	49.0		39.3	43.4	47.0
Sudan	49.0	51.0	53.0		46.6	48.6	51.0
Syria		68.1	69.0			64.0	65.0
Tunisia	61.1	66.4	69.0		60.1	64.9	67.0
Turkey	63.3	65.8	70.0		60.0	62.5	65.0
U.A.E.	69.8	72.9	74.0		65.4	68.6	70.0
Uganda	50.7	52.7	44.0		47.4	49.4	43.0

Source: World Development Report , various years, World Bank.
Basind databank.

ANNEX 2. TRENDS IN SOCIAL INDICATORS IN SELECTED OIC COUNTRIES

Countries	Infant mortality rate (Per 1,000 live births)		
	1980	1990	1992
Afghanistan	205.0	167.0	164.0
Albania	48.0	28.3	32.0
Algeria	118.0	68.0	55.0
Bahrain	44.0	14.0	12.0
Bangladesh	136.0	114.0	91.0
Benin	154.0	88.0	110.0
Burkina Faso	211.0	133.0	132.0
Cameroon	109.0	90.0	61.0
Chad	149.0	127.0	122.0
Comoros	88.3	94.0	89.0
Djibouti	132.0	117.0	113.0
Egypt	103.0	61.0	57.0
Gabon	111.9	99.0	94.0
Gambia	154.3	138.0	132.0
Guinea-Bissau	142.8	146.0	140.0
Guinea	165.0	140.0	133.0
Indonesia	93.0	71.0	66.0
Iran	108.0	46.0	65.0
Iraq	78.0	63.0	59.0
Jamahiriya	100.0	75.0	70.0
Jordan	69.0	40.0	28.0
Kuwait	34.0	17.0	14.0
Lebanon	41.0	44.0	35.0
Mauritania	143.0	122.0	117.0
Maldives	94.4	33.6	56.0
Mali	154.0	164.0	130.0
Malaysia	31.0	12.6	14.0
Morocco	107.0	75.0	57.0
Nigeria	135.0	101.0	84.0
Niger	146.0	130.0	123.0
Oman	135.2	37.0	20.0
Pakistan	126.0	104.0	95.0
Qatar	57.0	29.0	26.0
Saudi Arabia	114.0	65.0	28.0
Senegal	147.0	84.0	68.0
Sierra Leone	208.0	149.0	143.0
Somalia	146.0	127.0	123.0
Sudan	124.0	104.0	99.0
Syria	62.0	44.0	36.0
Tunisia	90.0	48.0	44.0
Turkey	123.0	69.0	54.0
U.A.E.	53.0	24.0	20.0
Uganda	97.0	99.0	104.0

ANNEX 2. (Continued)

	Adult literacy rate				Primary enrolment ratio		
	(Percentage)				(Percentage)		
Countries	1980	1990	1992		1980	1990	1992
Afghanistan	20.0	29.4	32.0		34		
Albania		85.0	85.0		113	101	101
Algeria	35.0	57.4	61.0		94	95	95
Bahrain		77.4			104	102	
Bangladesh	26.0	35.3	37.0		58	77	77
Benin	28.0	23.4	25.0		64	61	66
Burkina Faso	5.0	18.2	20.0		18	37	30.7
Cameroon		54.1	57.0		98	101	101
Chad	15.0	29.8	33.0		35	57	65
Comoros	47.9	61.0			88		75
Djibouti		19.0			35	44	39
Egypt	44.0	60.3	50.0		78	101	101
Gabon		60.7	62.0		115		
Gambia	20.0	27.2			51		68
Guinea-Bissau		36.5			68		60
Guinea	20.0	24.0	27.0		36	37	37
Indonesia	62.0	77.0	84.0		107		116
Iran	50.0	54.0	56.0		87	111	112
Iraq		59.7	62.0		113	111	
Jamahiriya		63.8	66.0		123		
Jordan	70.0	80.1	82.0		104	97	97
Kuwait	60.0	73.0	74.0		102		
Lebanon		80.1	81.0		111		112
Mauritania	17.0	34.0			37	50	55
Maldives		95.0					
Mali	10.0	32.0	36.0		27	24	25
Malaysia	60.0	78.4	80.0		93	93	93
Morocco	28.0	49.5	52.0		83	65	66
Nigeria		50.7	52.0		104	72	71
Niger	10.0	28.4	31.0		25	29	29
Oman		35.0			58	99	
Pakistan	24.0	34.8	36.0		39	42	46
Qatar		82.0			103	104	
Saudi Arabia	25.0	62.4	64.0		63	77	
Senegal	10.0	38.3	40.0		46	59	59
Sierra Leone	15.0	20.7	21.0		52	48	48
Somalia	60.0	24.1	27.0		19		
Sudan	32.0	27.1	28.0		50	50	
Syria	58.0	64.5	67.0		100	109	
Tunisia	62.0	65.3	68.0		103	116	117
Turkey	67.5	80.7	82.0		96	114	110
U.A.E.	56.0	55.0			89	116	
Uganda	52.0	48.3	51.0		50		71

Source: World Development Report 1994, World Bank.

World Tables 1994, World Bank.

Trends in Developing Economies 1994, World Bank.

**ANNEX 3. TRENDS IN CALORIE SUPPLY AND CHILDREN
SUFFERING FROM MALNUTRITION IN SELECTED OIC COUNTRIES**

Countries	Daily per capita calorie intake		
	1980	1990	1992
Algeria	2612.0	2944.0	3009.0
Bangladesh	1973.0	2037.0	
Benin	2145.0	2383.0	2405.0
Brunei	2650.0	2858.0	
Burkina Faso	1815.0	2219.0	2523.0
Cameroon	2340.0	2208.0	2266.0
Chad	1724.0	1738.0	1691.0
Comoros	1783.0	1760.0	2082.0
Egypt	3088.0	3310.0	3345.0
Gabon	2275.0	2343.0	2252.0
Gambia	2101.0	2290.0	2409.0
Guinea-Bissau	1768.0	2589.0	2715.0
Guinea	2172.0	2242.0	2023.0
Indonesia	2462.0	2605.0	
Kuwait	3019.0	3043.0	
Mauritania	2081.0	2447.0	2979.0
Mali	1898.0	2259.0	2539.0
Malaysia	2685.0	2671.0	
Morocco	2696.0	3031.0	3113.0
Nigeria	2129.0	2200.0	2342.0
Niger	2224.0	2239.0	2336.0
Pakistan	2155.0	2280.0	
Senegal	2415.0	2322.0	2317.0
Sierra Leone	2096.0	1899.0	1737.0
Somalia	1942.0	1874.0	1843.0
Sudan	2215.0	2043.0	1875.0
Syria	2957.0	3122.0	
Tunisia	2800.0	3122.0	3249.0
Turkey	3053.0	3196.0	
U.A.E.	3325.0	3285.0	
Uganda	2114.0	2178.0	2237.0

ANNEX 3. (Continued)

Countries	Children under 5 suffering from malnutrition (%)	
	1980-1985	1987-1992
Algeria		9.2
Bangladesh	71.7	66.5
Benin		35.0
Brunei		
Burkina Faso		45.5
Cameroon		13.6
Chad	35.0	
Comoros		
Egypt		10.4
Gabon	12.8	25.0
Gambia	20.0	
Guinea-Bissau	24.1	
Guinea		
Indonesia		39.9
Kuwait	6.4	7.8
Mauritania	31.0	30.0
Mali		25.1
Malaysia	23.2	
Morocco		11.8
Nigeria		35.7
Niger	49.4	
Pakistan	57.1	40.4
Senegal		
Sierra Leone	27.0	
Somalia		
Sudan	55.2	
Syria	25.0	
Tunisia		
Turkey		
U.A.E.		
Uganda		23.3

Source: FAO Production Yearbook , various years, United Nations.
 Social Indicators of Development, 1994, World Bank.

ANNEX 4. ENERGY CONSUMPTION PER CAPITA

Kg. of oil equivalent (Period Average)

Countries	1970-1975	1980-1985
Afghanistan	56.0	68.0
Albania	662.0	1169.0
Algeria	373.0	905.0
Azerbaijan		
Bahrain	9267.0	11398.0
Bangladesh	23.0	40.0
Benin	53.0	47.0
Brunei	1180.0	4872.0
Burkina Faso	12.0	18.0
Cameroon	65.0	110.0
Chad	20.0	19.0
Comoros	34.0	41.0
Djibouti	2171.0	1261.0
Egypt	254.0	535.0
Gabon	799.0	723.0
Gambia	58.0	75.0
Guinea-Bissau	46.0	37.0
Guinea	68.0	74.0
Indonesia	102.0	190.0
Iran	960.0	1159.0
Iraq	513.0	1044.0
Jamahiriya	1525.0	2344.0
Jordan	453.0	1072.0
Kuwait	5764.0	6870.0
Kyrgyzstan		
Lebanon	774.0	
Mauritania	120.0	124.0
Maldives	15.0	115.0
Mali	20.0	25.0
Malaysia	490.0	950.0
Morocco	198.0	253.0
Nigeria	72.0	148.0
Niger	25.0	42.0
Oman	379.0	2551.0
Pakistan	123.0	177.0
Palestine		
Qatar	2673.0	14218.0
Saudi Arabia	1446.0	5112.0
Senegal	138.0	141.0
Sierra Leone	77.0	79.0
Somalia	36.0	67.0
Sudan	57.0	64.0
Syria	495.0	812.0
Tajikistan		
Tunisia	330.0	516.0
Turkey	668.0	776.0
Turkmenistan		
U.A.E.	3915.0	11231.0
Uganda	43.0	25.0
Republic of Yemen	111.0	226.0

ANNEX 4. (Continued)
Kg. of oil equivalent (Most recent estimate)

Countries	1987-1992	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Afghanistan	119.0			90.0		
Albania	421.0			1152.0		
Algeria		1094.0	1906.0	1956.0	1956.0	988.0
Azerbaijan						
Bahrain	10883.0					
Bangladesh		50.0	51.0	57.0	57.0	59.0
Benin		46.0	45.0	46.0	46.0	19.0
Brunei	7341.0					
Burkina Faso			17.0	17.0	17.0	16.0
Cameroon		152.0	141.0	147.0	147.0	77.0
Chad		18.0	17.0	17.0	17.0	16.0
Comoros	35.0					
Djibouti	995.0					
Egypt		607.0	636.0	598.0	594.0	586.0
Gabon		1134.0	1155.0	1158.0	1154.0	784.0
Gambia	60.0					
Guinea-Bissau	37.0				38.0	37.0
Guinea		78.0	71.0	73.0	68.0	67.0
Indonesia		229.0	263.0	272.0	279.0	303.0
Iran		875.0	1019.0	1026.0	1078.0	1256.0
Iraq		781.0	752.0	774.0		
Jamahiriya		2719.0	3049.0	3399.0		
Jordan		723.0	773.0	994.0	856.0	813.0
Kuwait		4637.0	4944.0	6414.0		
Kyrgyzstan						1148.0
Lebanon				968.0		
Mauritania		111.0	114.0		111.0	108.0
Maldives	144.0					
Mali		21.0	24.0	24.0	23.0	22.0
Malaysia		784.0	920.0	974.0	1066.0	1445.0
Morocco		239.0	244.0	247.0	252.0	278.0
Nigeria		150.0	135.0	138.0	154.0	128.0
Niger		43.0	40.0		41.0	39.0
Oman		2012.0	2556.0	2648.0	2859.0	3070.0
Pakistan		210.0	213.0	233.0	243.0	223.0
Palestine						
Qatar	14831.0					
Saudi Arabia		3098.0	4307.0	5033.0	4866.0	4463.0
Senegal		155.0	153.0	156.0	105.0	111.0
Sierra Leone		76.0	76.0	77.0	75.0	73.0
Somalia		66.0	78.0	64.0		7.0
Sudan		58.0	57.0	58.0	54.0	69.0
Syria		913.0	896.0	913.0	955.0	823.0
Tajikistan						
Tunisia		499.0	546.0	520.0	556.0	567.0
Turkey		822.0	837.0	857.0	809.0	948.0
Turkmenistan						
U.A.E.		6481.0	10554.0	10874.0		14631.0
Uganda		25.0	25.0	27.0	25.0	24.0
Rep. of Yemen		755.0	234.0	234.0	96.0	241.0

Source: World Development Report, various years, World Bank.
Social Indicators of Development 1994, World Bank.