



Vibrant COMMUNITIES

Poverty and Poverty Reduction Learning Series

*Session Three: Common
Ground with Diversity*

April 18, 2007

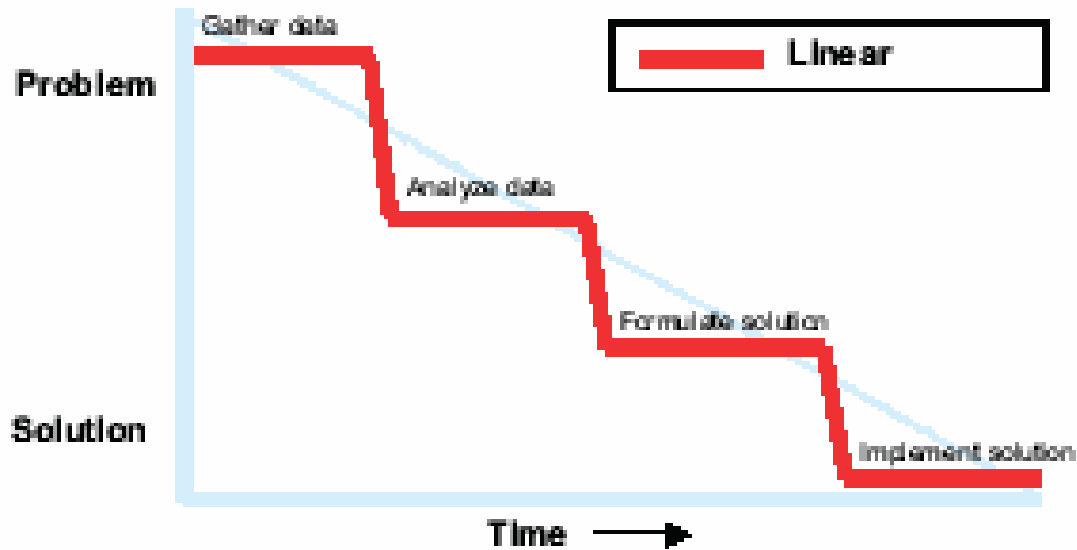
Today's Session

- *Question:* Based on our deeper look at the issues involved, how might we revise the conception of poverty and poverty reduction underpinning Vibrant Communities?
- *Goal:* Agree on some compass points to guide preparation of a specific proposal to be considered by national and local partners.
- *Steps:*
 - Quickly review underlying challenges
 - Consider perspectives of various participants
 - Explore two broad options.

What We Want

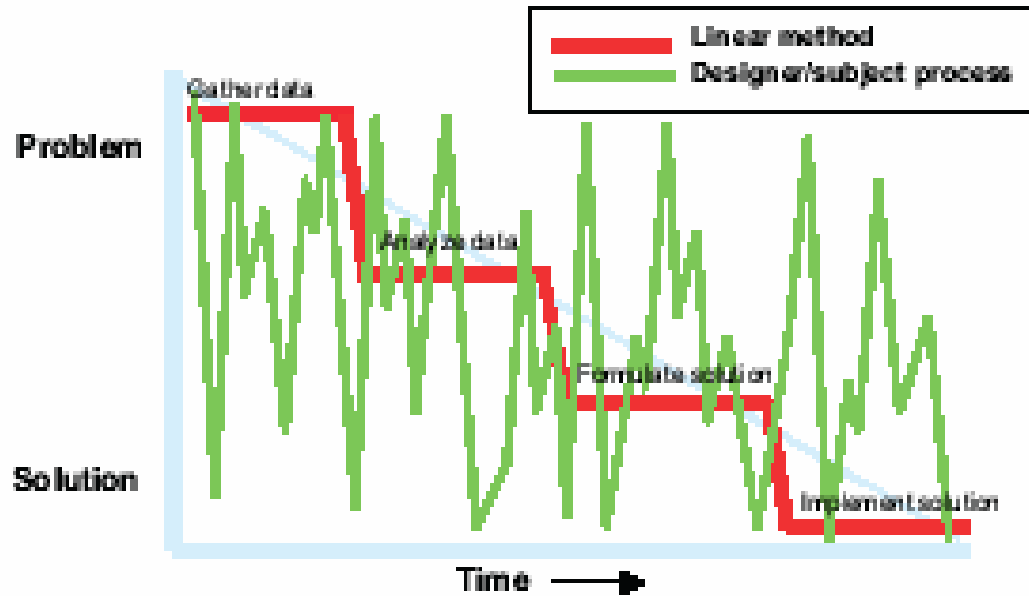
- Conception of poverty and poverty reduction that incorporates the various levels and dimensions VC partners feel are important to our work.
- Language that is supportive of low-income households, accessible to a wide audience and helps to mobilize support for poverty reduction efforts.
- A framework that better specifies what we mean by ‘poverty reduction’ and strengthens tracking of these results.

Simple or Tame Problem



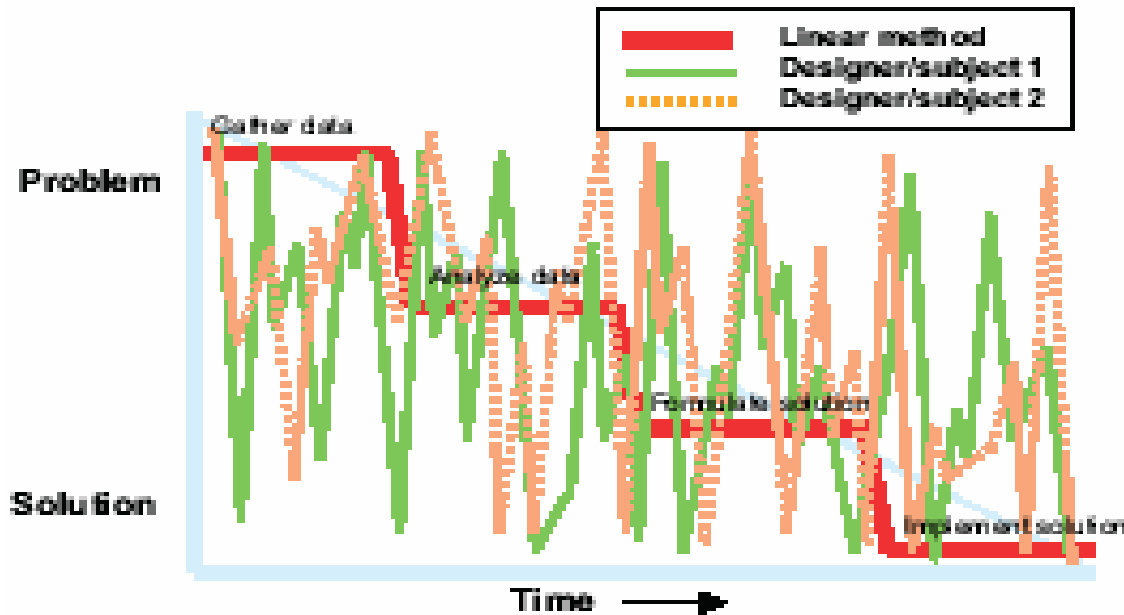
- Can be addressed through a linear problem-solving process: gather data, analyze data, formulate solution, implement.

Complex or Wicked Problem



- Problem-solving with a technically complex ‘wicked’ problem is not linear
- It involves jumping back and forth among the various elements of problem-solving trying to get a reasonably good match between understanding of the problem and solution.

Wicked Problem + Social Complexity



- Add social complexity and you have various partners understanding the problem differently and posing different possible solutions.
- When differences in perspective are not recognized or when everyone is convinced his/her own view is correct, the work becomes fragmented.

Dialogue Mapping

- Don't try to tame a complex problem
- Deal with the issue in its complexity by seeking coherence among the diverse issues of concern to various partners
- Map the conversation among stakeholders so as to recognize the various perspectives at play.

Framing the Issue: Local Perspectives

Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear and specific targets• Practical strategies and tangible roles• Sound results tracking
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Innovative, promising approach• Partnerships, including business• Clear definition of poverty and poverty reduction• Goals/strategies to which policies/programs can be attached• Solid evidence of deep and durable outcomes

Nonprofit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practical and substantive strategies• Diverse and flexible responses• Attention to systemic issues• Asset building perspective• New partners and resources
Low-Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Substantial and effective action• Affirming, inclusive language• Open, sensitive and supportive process with appropriate opportunities to participate• Sustained commitment

Framing the Issue: Pan-Canadian Perspectives

Local Communities

- **Balance of economic and other considerations (e.g., inclusion, empowerment) in the conception of poverty and poverty reduction**
- **Balance in goals related to household outcomes, community capacity building and systems change**
- Recognition of prevention as well as reduction
- Clarity and specificity in national targets and indicators - poverty reduction means *from what to what?*
- **Flexibility for local variation**
- Robust but manageable results tracking and reporting

National Sponsors

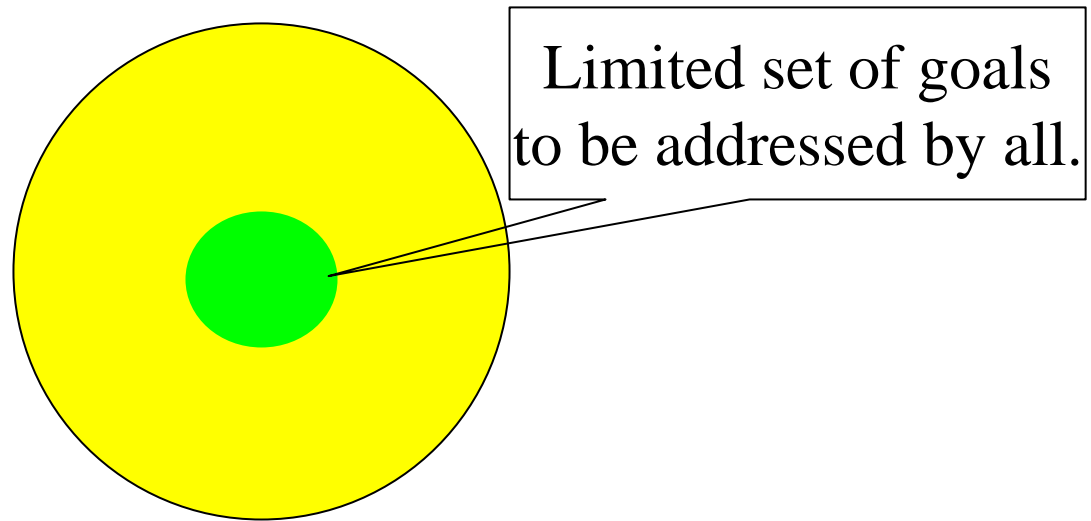
- Explore and test a promising set of approaches to poverty reduction
- Support a community driven (diversity) and a Pan-Canadian (commonality) process
- **‘Prove the principle’ re. comprehensive, multisectoral approaches to ourselves and to others.**
- **Make the work accessible to a wide range of partners and (potential) supporters**
- Allow for double-goals of learning and evaluation: building the practice and making the case for support
- Keep learning and evaluation productive and manageable

Framing Poverty and Poverty Reduction: Key Factors

Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear definition accessible to a wide range of partners and (potential) supporters• Affirming, inclusive language
Developing Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diverse and flexible responses• Balance of economic and other considerations (e.g., inclusion, empowerment) and of action at various levels (household, organizations, community, wider system)

Measuring Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Clear and specific indicators of progress•Solid evidence of deep and durable outcomes
Pan-Canadian Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Framework that facilitates collaborative learning, helps build a case for support and allows flexibility for local variation

Minimal Approach

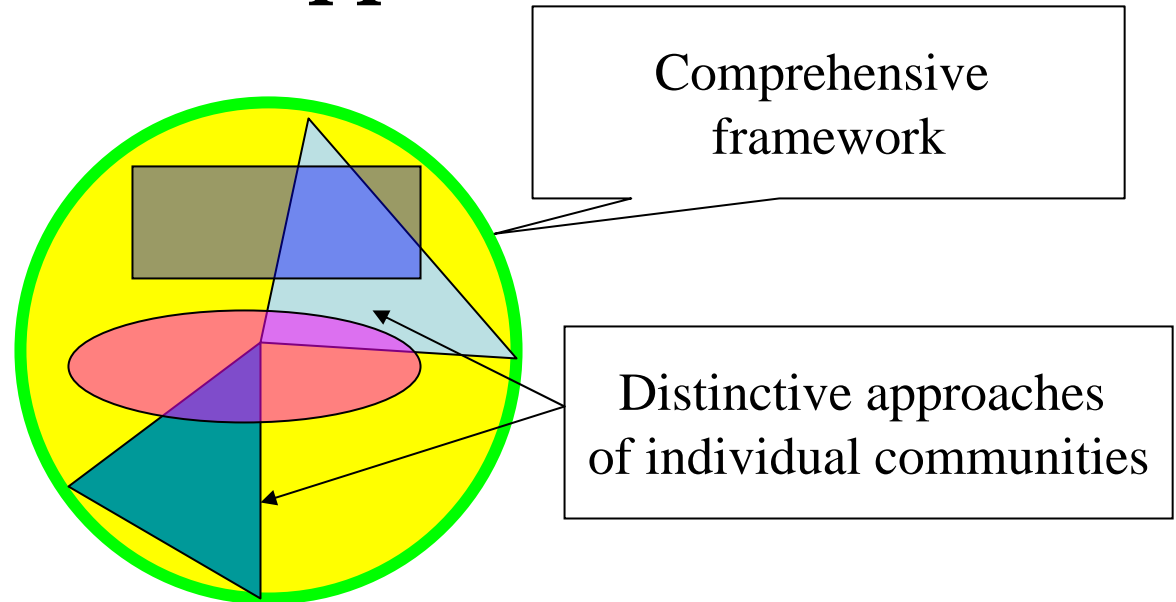


- Agree on a core focus
 - Local partners go beyond that core as they see fit
- Advantage: keeps it simple
- Disadvantage: may result in perceived fuzziness and contradiction, and leave out elements believed to be important

Minimal Approach

- Poverty is understood specifically in economic terms
- Poverty reduction in this view involves achieving a limited set of targets regarded as key steppingstones to economic well-being, e.g., increased income, new or improved employment, training and education and financial assets.

Maximal Approach



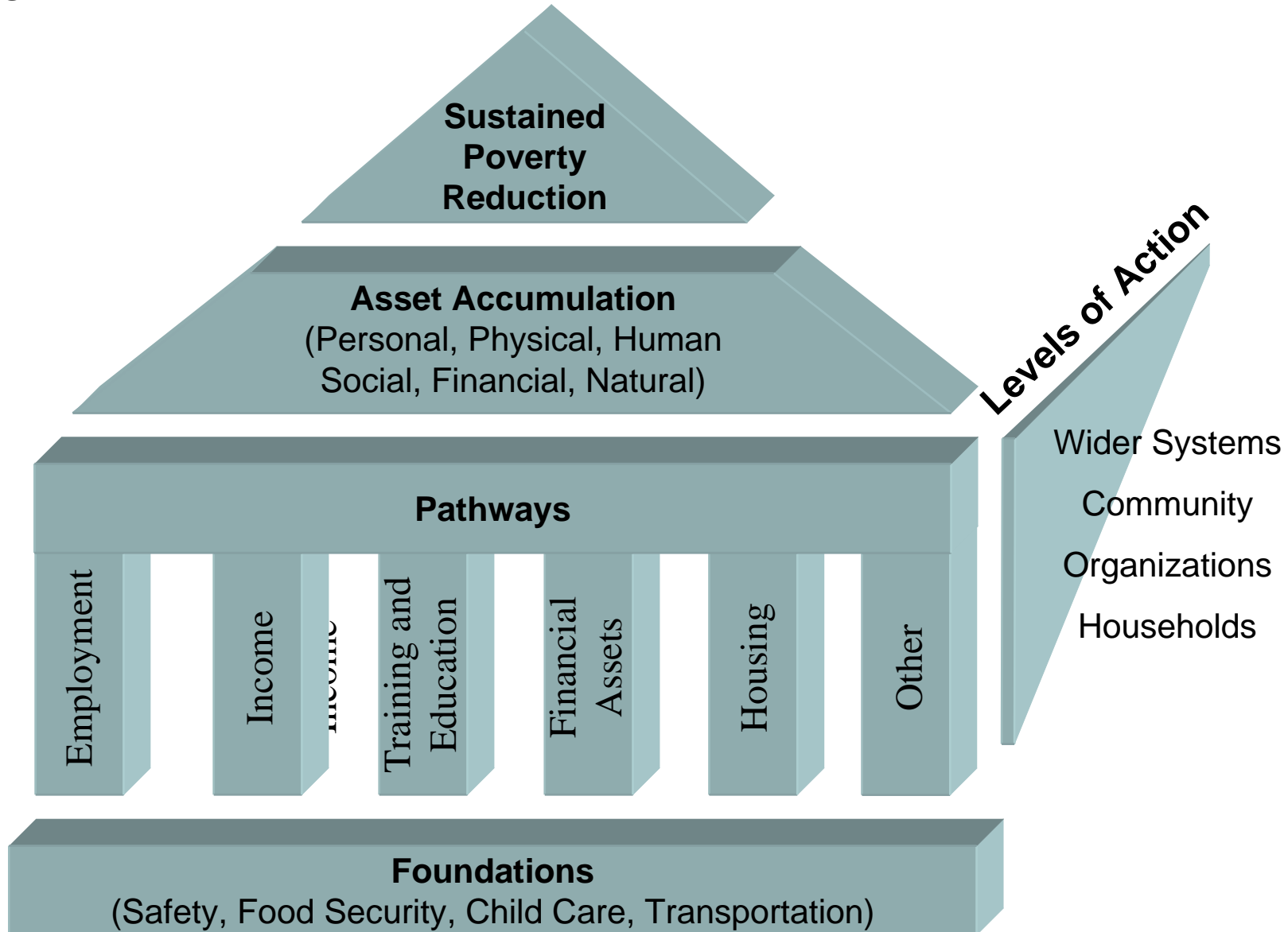
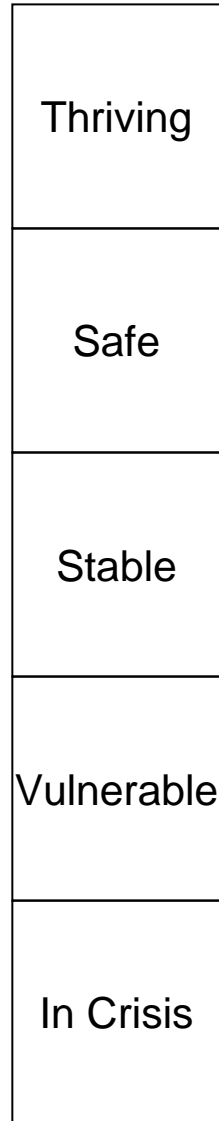
- Scope out a comprehensive framework
 - Local partners chart their own space within this framework
- Advantage: Addresses the complexity and allows for learning (partners filling in various pieces of a big picture)
- Disadvantage: more challenging to communicate and focus

Maximal Approach

- Poverty is seen more broadly in terms of economic and social exclusion.
- It could be defined as the lack of assets and opportunities required to participate in economic and social life in a manner comparable to others in one's own society.
- Poverty reduction in this view involves multiple assets, multiple pathways, multiple levels of action and multiple thresholds.

Comprehensive Framework

Thresholds



Checklist

Condition Addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Lack of assets and opportunities required to participate in economic and social life in a manner comparable to others in one's own society.•Synthesizes elements of all major approaches.
Broad or Narrow	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Comprehensive in concept but allows for focus in practice•Communities situate themselves within as they see fit.
Transitional, Chronic or Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Both•Acknowledges incremental change and movement early in the journey as well as near the end.

Causation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Situational and structural•Identifies relationship between assets and opportunities•Acknowledges assets, provides supports needed to build them, improves the structure of opportunities people face.
Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Combination of poverty lines, pathways (scales and ladders), asset accumulation•Captures incremental change and movement across key thresholds at various points along the journey.
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Familiar terminology (poverty) but a broadened conception (assets, participation/inclusion)•Affirms possibility while recognizing limitations•Interplay between households and the social systems in which they live.

Engaging Partners

- Provides a coherent, albeit complex, national framework
- Allows partners to enter from many different vantage points, share diverse approaches and learn together.

Developing Strategies

- Acknowledges both foundational strategies and building strategies.
- Allows exploration of diverse strategies including integrated and non-integrated
- Asset-building can apply to both poverty prevention and poverty reduction
- Supports action at multiple levels.

Measuring Progress

- More robust and detailed set of tools for measuring progress
- Balance desire for fuller documentation of results with time and energy
- Need a practical and manageable results tracking process.

Communication

- Complex framework may be overwhelming to some.
- Need a good graphic!

