

respect of international comparisons of poverty and inequality. In one example that was key at the time, it was essentially impossible in the late 1970s to deduce what had happened to distribution in Brazil during the "economic miracle" of the 1960s, whether the poor had benefitted from the income growth, or whether the benefits had flowed to a narrow wealthy group, see the original analysis by Fields (1977) and the criticism by Ahluwalia et al. (1980). Although a set of international comparisons of inequality had earlier been produced within the World Bank by Jain (1975), these were simply compilations of survey data that happened to be available within the organization at the time, with no attempt to allow for differences in definition, or to correct for non-comparabilities between countries. (Given the difficulties, JaM's figures are not a sound basis on which to make international comparisons, and results that rely on them should be viewed with great skepticism, [see for example Anand and Kanbur's (1993) critique of Ahluwalia (1976)], although the lesson is widely ignored in the recent political economy literature, for example Persson and Tabellini (1990) and Alesina and Perotti, (1992).

However, by the time the first LSS surveys were ready to be implemented, as a cross section in Peru in 1984, and with a rotating panel in Cote d'Ivoire a year later, the emphasis within the World Bank had shifted away from poverty more towards a household modelling approach. Influenced by Beckerian models of household behavior, by their extension to integrated farm-household models as in Singh, Squire, and Strauss (1986), as well as by previous experience with RAND's Malaysian Family Life Survey, the philosophy was to collect data from a relatively small number of households, but to attempt to be comprehensive, covering consumption, all income generating activities, agriculture, labor supply, business activities, gifts and transfers, as well as education (including parents' education), migration, demographics, health, and fertility, as well as some limited measurement of anthropometrics. The Ivorian data, for example, come from 1600 households, selected as a simple random sample, 800 of whom were retained as panel members, with a new 800 added each year. The 50 percent rotation pattern comes from a desire to collect at least some panel data combined with doubts about the feasibility of running a much longer panel in Africa, and from the ever present need to produce results relatively quickly.

One of the most impressive achievements of the LSS is its demonstration that microcomputer technology can be used effectively in collecting data in LDCs. A full description of the methodology is given in Ainsworth and Mufioz (1986). Responses were quickly taken to local headquarters, and entered into PCs, and then immediately run through editing programs, so that cross-checks and corrections could be carried out on subsequent visits. The rapid data entry and editing programs also mean that data are available very quickly at the end of the survey, and the teams produced preliminary survey reports within a few