

CROP newsletter

Comparative Research Programme On Poverty

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ON THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STATE AND POVERTY

There seems to be a growing consensus of a need for an activist state if efficient poverty reduction is to take place. UNDP, the World Bank and other important organisations form part of that new consensus. Neo-liberal economic policies and 'globalisation' have rolled back the state everywhere, including the social sectors (health and education). At the same time there is a mounting awareness that macro-economic growth might increase rather than reduce poverty. The trickle down effect does not work, in particular not in the developing countries. Economic growth does not seem to be sustainable without an effective regulatory state. Hence, we see that both economic and social rethinking contributes to a new discussion on the role of the state.

CROP has made the relationship between state and poverty one of its major research projects. So far, CROP has organised in cooperation with regional research institutions three workshops on *The Role of the State in Poverty Reduction*: The first one in Gaborone in 1997, the second in Cape Town in 1998, and the third in Amman in 1999. A book based on papers presented in these workshops will be published later this year (*Poverty, Power, and the State*, edited by Francis Wilson, Nazneen Kanji and Einar Braathen).

The past performance of many states is discouraging. The overall impression is that the state has tended to produce and reproduce poverty, rather than reduce it. States that show the worst performance in poverty

reduction are likely to:

- be insulated from society, people and poverty; or
- protect the rich legally and physically in their exploitation of the poor; and/or
- squander assets of the poor through taxation and forms of forced appropriation that feed the state-connected elite; and/or
- suppress or even eradicate local institutions, social forces and productive structures that could help the poor help themselves or create patterns to redistribute wealth.

To understand better the activist state now called for, systematic cross-national comparative research is needed. Two directions of questions and hypotheses worth examining in future research can be suggested.

One critical factor for successful poverty reduction seems to be the type and scope of *state relationships with society*. Hence, the two agendas of good democratic governance and of poverty reduction need to be assessed in combination. The new poverty agenda and emerging strategies of the state should be examined. What does it mean, for example, to create an 'enabling environment' for the poor and to help the poor help themselves? Which changes must the state undertake to be capable to do so? Under which conditions can pro-poor governance be enhanced, and at which point does it challenge the hegemonic discourse of liberal democracy? A convenient choice for most states is to extend the dominant pro-business and pro-civil society agenda. Then, the

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role of the state will be to identify and support social forces and create multiple state-society partnerships for poverty reduction. For researchers, one set of questions might be: How effective are civil society organisations in putting poor people's own concerns and interests on the agenda? Is the poverty issue just a new mantle to pursue other agendas, like obtaining donor funds to organisations of the non-poor? What makes the private business sector promote, eventually stifle, pro-poor initiatives? Which forms of partnership between state and society are really new and in response to the challenge of poverty reduction? Are there

different partnership experiences from one issue to another, like job creation and protection, support of traditional livelihoods, development of social service sectors, establishment of social safety nets and care for the most vulnerable people? When do such partnerships perform well and when do they perform not so well, and why?

Another critical factor for successful poverty reduction seems to be the characteristics and strength of local (national) knowledge about poverty. The strength of technical knowledge - information and facts about the poverty in the country - influences the legitimacy of the poverty agenda, as well as the profes-

sional capacity of poverty-related policy making. Moreover, a crucial factor is the relationship between the state and the social carriers of this knowledge. Is the state capable of generating and assimilating relevant knowledge without violating professional norms? The knowledge factor also includes ideological components which incite questions like: What is the ruling definition of poverty and of 'poverty lines', and what is their bias? What is defined as the main social issue of the country? Do these definitions express a local hegemony, or do they reflect imported and 'borrowed' knowledge? To what degree, and in which forms, are poor people influencing the professionals and the knowledge underlying the policy making? How does the state shape social attitudes and public discourses on poverty? To what degree is there a public anti-poverty agenda, and is it known and supported among the citizens? Last but not least, which differences and similarities are found across countries?

To address the first set of questions a new CROP workshop in the series on the role of the state will be organised in October this year, in Ghana. The theme is: "State and Society: Partnership in Poverty Reduction?" Concerning the role of knowledge in poverty reduction a research proposal named "Governance and the Social Construction of Poverty" has been drafted as a component in the larger project on the role of the state in poverty reduction.

Researchers and others who are interested in these issues and other researchable questions on the role of the state in poverty reduction are invited to contact the CROP Secretariat.

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Best Practices in Poverty Reduction

In co-operation with UNESCO and MOST, CROP convened a 1-day workshop in Amman, Jordan, November 10th 1999, to help develop a framework for a project on best practices in poverty reduction.

During the opening ceremony of the workshops the prizewinners of the CROP/MOST competition on "Best Practices in Poverty Reduction", Dr. **Anuradha Joshi** (with Dr. **Mick Moore**) and Prof. **Mohammad Shafi**, were presented with their awards.

7 papers were presented and discussed at the workshop:

-Learning from Informal Markets: Innovative Approaches to Land and Housing Provision by **Erhard Berner**, The Netherlands

-Practicas de Excelencia de Combate a La Pobreza en Argentina by **Alberto Cimadamore**, Argentina

-Best Practices: Skepticism and Hope by **S. M. Miller**, USA

-A Methodological Approach to "Best Practices" by **Else Øyen**, Norway

-Enabling Environments, Social Capital, and Effective Anti-poverty Programmes by **Anuradha Joshi** and **Mick Moore**, USA and Great Britain

-Good Practices in Social Policy: Lessons from High-Achieving Countries by **Santosh Mehrotra**, Italy

-Best Practices in Poverty Reduction and Management of Social Transformation by **Mohammad Shafi**, India

The papers focussed on how a "best practice" in relation to a certain kind of poverty reduction can be described and analysed, and how the context in which the "best practice" functions has an impact on the development of such a practice

The workshop was financed by the UNESCO office in Amman, the International Social Science Council, UNESCO/MOST and CROP. The workshop was held under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Bint Talal of Jordan.

A publication based on papers and exchanges during the workshop is under preparation. Preliminary title is "Best Practices in Poverty Reduction. A Guide to the Identification, Understanding and Transfer of Good Practice". Else Øyen is responsible for the publication.

CROP ANNUAL REPORT 1999

1999 has been a good year for CROP in the sense that much has been achieved. New members have joined, the Programme Committees have an abundance of abstracts to chose from when organising the programme for their workshops, the research projects progress through series of workshops in different regions which increase their comparative value, several publications are in the pipeline, the expertise embedded in CROPnet is sought after by international and national organisations, and partial core financing has been secured, writes the Chair of CROP in the CROP Annual Report 1999.

You can read the full report on the CROP webpage at <http://www.crop.org>. Please write to the CROP Secretariat if you want a hardcopy of the report.

NEW BOOK ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

"Social Development and Public Policy: A Study of Some Successful Experiences" edited by Dharam Ghai, and published by Macmillan on behalf of UNRISD, is now available.

Visit UNRISD on Internet at <http://www.unrisd.org> for ordering information.

editorial

All research results need second opinions. That is particularly true for poverty research where strong external actors and vested interests dominate the field. Efficient poverty reduction can not be obtained without fundamental changes in the distribution of resources. In spite of verbal assurances that poverty reduction is on top of their agenda it is not surprising that it is in the interest of many actors to keep poverty reducing measures under control. As a result, there are poverty researchers who are under pressure to fit their research results into the interests of external actors, to stay within certain paradigms or to work in areas where only limited poverty reduction can take place.

National anti-poverty plans need second opinions. The World Bank paradigm of economic growth as the major tool for poverty reduction needs second opinions. The donor driven initiatives need second opinions. The many reports on poverty reducing strategies from commercialised consultants need second opinions. The Sen discussion on capabilities needs second opinions.

Some of the actors welcome second opinions and incorporate them in an academic dialogue. Others suppress them. However, the latest development is to co-opt the second opinions and invite them on board through paid assignments and a prestigious incorporation in the official reports. The second opinion is fused into the dominant way of thinking and part of the original argument may be cut down or the wording slightly changed to fit the official view. Thereby the second opinion and freedom of speech are acknowledged while at the same time turned into a less dangerous and less challenging criticism. For outsiders the second opinion is seen as being on the same side as the dominant view and only slightly different.

This development is particularly worrisome in poor countries where universities and research institutions can offer only a meagre pay to their employees. Whenever a second opinion develops it can almost always be bought by strong actors. Much of poverty research is now directed towards the poor countries. It seems self-evident that researchers from these countries should be in the forefront of poverty research. They know the historical, cultural and economic development of the region and have the endogenous knowledge. Outside experts and opinions have dominated the poverty discussion for a long time. Under a regime of co-optation they will continue to do so. The second opinions seem to disappear as soon as they have been voiced.

CALL FOR PAPERS

CROP AND CLACSO CONVENE A WORKSHOP ON

THE DEMOGRAPHY OF POVERTY IN LATIN AMERICA

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, NOVEMBER 9 - 11, 2000

CROP convenes a workshop on "The Demography of Poverty in Latin America" in cooperation with Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO). You are cordially invited to offer a paper (in English or Spanish) for the workshop. The workshop will include an open meeting for policymakers and the media. While all papers must address some topic within the broad area of the demography of poverty in Latin America, workshop organizers are especially interested in papers concerning one or more of the following, preferably of a comparative nature:

- Poverty and morbidity / mortality
- Poverty and fertility and reproductive behaviour
- Poverty and family and household structure
- Poverty and children, elders and women
- Poverty and internal migration and residential mobility
- Poverty and problems of urbanization, squatter settlements and inner city slums
- The demography of poverty and social policies in contemporary Latin America

A background paper for the workshop will be available from the CROP Secretariat in March.

The workshop will be limited to 35 participants. Preference will be given to scholars from Latin America, but scholars from other areas are also invited. All participants will be expected to take part in the proceedings (in English or Spanish), either presenting or discussing papers. Participants bear the responsibility for their own funding. However, a limited number of travel grants are available. The grants will be awarded from the CROP Secretariat, according to geography (CROP's policy is to prioritize researchers from "the third world"), and the relevance, quality and originality of the abstract/paper. Please indicate if you need a travel grant, enclose a budget, and state the amount you are able to cover from other sources. As a rule, accommodation will be covered for all participants during the workshop.

If you wish to present a paper, please send an abstract (in English, Spanish or Portuguese) to the CROP Secretariat.

THE DEADLINE IS JUNE 1st, 2000

The abstract should include: name, title, a brief CV, full postal and e-mail address, phone and fax numbers; the title of the proposed paper and a summary of the main theme or argument. Please also indicate which of the categories, listed above, your paper falls into. The summary should indicate theory, methods and findings of your proposed paper, and should not exceed ONE PAGE (A4). Include also a list of your recent publications on a separate sheet.

Participants will be notified by June 15th whether their proposals for papers have been accepted, and will then be given details of the format in which the papers should be prepared (the deadline for submission of the paper will be **August 15th, 2000**).

All enquiries about the workshop should be addressed to:

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The second opinions of individual researchers will never be able to overcome the vested interests of the strong actors in the public discussion on poverty reduction. If they are to compete for the power of the pen the second opinions need a collective forum and alternative channels for transfer of their knowledge. They need a strong and independent arena

where their ideas can develop freely, blossom and give impetus to new and creative thinking about poverty issues. The public need alternative information through second opinions. CROP is but a small arena for second opinions. More such arenas are needed.

Else Øyen, Chair of CROP

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program accepts applications from mid-career professionals from selected countries in the developing world who demonstrate leadership and a commitment to public service. A non-degree program, Fellows are placed at American universities for a ten-month stay of professional training and development. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and administered by the Institute of International Education.

For application form consult the American embassy in your home country. For more information visit the Fellowship Program on Internet at "<http://www.iie.org/pgms/hhh/home.htm>"

NEW JOURNAL ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Journal of Human Development is a new journal from the Human Development Report Office. The Journal is set to publish work that analyses the concept, measurement and/or practice of human development at local, national and global levels. It will provide a forum for the open exchange of ideas among a broad spectrum of development practitioners, policy-makers and academics and will aim to stimulate further research and development of concepts and measurement tools for human development. The managing editor of the journal, Sarah Burd-Sharps, can be contacted on E-mail: sarah.burd-sharps@undp.org for more information.

CALL FOR PAPERS: RC19 ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2000

The ISA Research Committee 19 on "Poverty, Social Welfare and Social Policy" organises a conference at Tilburg University, The Netherlands, August 24th-27th. The theme of the conference is "Social Protection in the New Era: What Future for Welfare?". Those who would like to submit a paper based on research in the wide area covered by RC19 are cordially invited to do so.

The conference's website on Internet is at "http://www.kub.nl/~fsw_2/home/worschot/rc19.htm"

LIST OF CROP EVENTS 2000 - 2001

June 2000:

"Social Capital Formation in Poverty Reduction: Which Role for the Civil Society Organizations and the State". Symposium organised jointly with UNESCO/MOST and ISSC during the "UN Social Summit + 5" in Geneva, Switzerland. Open Meeting. Papers by invitation only.

October 2000:

12-14: "State and Society: Partnership in Poverty Reduction?", workshop organised jointly with ISSER, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana.

November 2000:

9-11: "The Demography of Poverty in Latin America", a joint CROP/CLACSO workshop, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

WORKSHOPS UNDER PREPARATION

May 2001:

"Law and Poverty IV" workshop organised with the International Institute for the Sociology of Law (IISL) in Oñati, Spain.

CALL FOR PAPERS: WORLD FORUM ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The International Research Foundation for Development invites international, regional and national organizations and individuals (contemplative thinkers, policy makers, practitioners, and civil society members) to participate in the World Forum on Social Development to be held in Geneva, Switzerland from June 22-30, 2000. The main objective of the forum is to contribute to the United Nations effort of ensuring the implementation of the Copenhagen declaration and the Program of Action. Abstracts should be submitted by March 15th. Visit <http://www.irfd.org> for more information.

The E-mail address is
crop@uib.no

CROP IN BRIEF

CROP is a world-wide network of researchers and experts on poverty. The aim of CROP is to establish an arena for interdisciplinary and comparative research on poverty in developed and developing countries. CROP organises regional workshops, symposia and international conferences, promotes joint research projects and publications, links poverty researchers and disseminates information about poverty research, on a non-profit basis. CROP has developed a database on poverty researchers, and documentation of ongoing research. CROP is chaired by professor Else Øyen, University of Bergen, Norway.

If you wish to have your name listed in CROPnet, you are welcome to write to the CROP Secretariat and request a copy of the CROP Database Survey form. For further information please contact the CROP Secretariat

WEBPAGE FOR CROP

Those who have an Internet connection and a WWW browser programme installed on the computer, find the CROP web page at <http://www.crop.org>. The pages hold general information about CROP, news about past and ongoing activities, as well as the latest CROP newsletter.

Please note: We can no longer answer the increased demand for copies of single papers presented at CROP conferences and workshops. However, if you have the patience, most of the papers become available through the publications that follow the conferences and will be duly announced. We still supply the authors addresses, phone & fax numbers.

At the CROP Secretariat you will meet:

Else Øyen, Chair

Kirsti Thesen Sælen, Co-ordinator

Hans Egil Offerdal, Special Adviser, pt. Mexico

Einar Braathen, Programme Officer

Inge Erling Tesdal, Executive Officer

THE QUOTE

"Poverty is the worst form of violence"

Mahatma Gandhi