

CROP newsletter

Comparative Research Programme On Poverty

Vol. 13, No. 3, October 2006

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MY 15 YEARS WITH CROP

In November the General Assembly of the International Social Science Council meets to elect a new Scientific Director for CROP. I have notified the Council that time has come to find my successor as CROP Scientific Director. I do so with the conviction that CROP is now a healthy teenager who after a difficult childhood faces a bright future with new options and friends all over the world who will bring him/her wisdom and help her/him grow stronger.

My 15 years with CROP can be characterised by joy and worry. The joy has come through my many meetings with scholars all over the world, young and old, based in the periphery or at the centre of academia, working under stable or not so stable political and economic conditions, and some even under threat to their career or personal life. They have all made it their business to give poverty a face through research. I feel deeply grateful. It has been a personal learning experience and a building of friendships past our common interest in poverty research. It has been a joy to be with researchers coming from different political spheres and see them sitting around the same table analysing poverty issues without any show of political disagreement. Their joint interest in poverty research was at the core of their interaction. It has been a joy to watch the learning process when paradigms from different disciplines are confronted in a workshop and new insights emerge. It has also given me great pleasure to witness the expanding research

literature and the growing number of people engaged in poverty research. While it is difficult to judge the impact of all this activity we have seen that poverty issues have made their way up on the political agenda and more diversified discourses have emerged. Poverty researchers may not be able to take much credit for the former but I believe we have had a role in the development of new discourses and an improved understanding of poverty as an outcome of the interaction between a society and its members.

The worry is a different matter and has been a steady companion. Poverty is a dismal subject to study and leaves its marks on even the most hard-headed researcher. At times I have avoided slums and the eyes of poor kids because the sorrow and despair I saw crippled my senses and made me question the legitimacy of research. It is a syndrome that many poverty researchers share and it makes it easy to understand why researchers call for action rather than extended research or try a compromise down a rather defunct road to action research. On another level my despair has turned towards researchers who are less stringent in their research on poverty than they would be on other subject matters. Once more the poor are cheated out of their rights, now the right to have their lives and conditions deciding their livelihoods presented as truthfully as high quality research is able to do. The market is flooded with second-hand research reports on pov-

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erty, including many consultancy reports that are used as major guides to poverty reducing strategies. At the other end of the range we find those endless well designed projects that try to count the number of poor people in still more refined manners. It can be questioned whether the very large resources invested in these projects can still be justified. On another level I experience the worry about a poverty phenomenon that is huge, deep and penetrating. The Millennium goals make us expect that some of the poverty will be halved by 2015. While all efforts to reduce poverty are welcome and needed, they are if successful but a small step forward. There is no reason to rest in optimism for a long time to come unless a new and more comprehensive understanding of poverty is introduced and is allowed to rule the political and financial ground all over the world. We need to bring in new and more realistic scenarios about how to handle root

causes of poverty and what will happen if poverty is not brought to an end.

I have been asked what I will do next. I am not quite certain. Through the years I have been involved in so many discussions on poverty and listened to so many interesting presentations on research results in different cultural settings that maybe time has come to find a peaceful place to sit down and write in order to sort out some of all these experiences. As some of you will know it is the notion of poverty production in a comparative setting I see as a navigable way forward in the further development of poverty research.

But right now the most important for me is to say THANK YOU to all of you who made CROP possible.

Prof. **Else Øyen** has served as Scientific Director of CROP since the start of the programme in 1991, she can be reached by E-mail: else.oyen@crop.uib.no

CLACSO-CROP PANEL AT CLACSO GENERAL ASSEMBLY

During the CLACSO (Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales/The Latin American Council of Social Sciences) General Assembly in Rio de Janeiro, 21-25 August, the CLACSO-CROP programme organized a panel on *New Frontiers in Poverty Research*. The participants in the panel focused in particular on poverty research in Latin America and the Caribbean, by giving an overview of recent findings as well as a critical look at future challenges for research on poverty in the region. **Alberto Cimadamore**, from the CLACSO-CROP programme, moderated the session.

In the first part of the event **Ana Gabriela Contreras**, a former junior scholar with the CLACSO-CROP programme, now affiliated with FLACSO Guatemala, presented the findings from her paper on *Law, legislation and access to justice: Alternatives to strengthen the struggle against poverty or mechanisms for reproduction?* Her presentation was followed by the paper *Illusions and their roads. Governing of water and its mechanisms of rural poverty production in Ecuadorian Andes* by former senior scholar with the CLACSO-CROP programme, **Juan Fernando Terán**, Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, Ecuador. **Fernando Lizárraga**, methodological tutor of the CLACSO-CROP programme, Argentina, summed up the session with reflections on *Absent states, present subjects and situated researchers*.

In the second part of the panel the following papers were presented: *Critical limits in approaches to poverty and inequality. The Cuban way in crucial contrast* by former senior scholar with the CLACSO-CROP programme **Mayra Espina Prieto**, Centro de Investigaciones Psicológicas y Sociológicas (CIPS), Cuba; *Poverty and sociology: elements of reflection and contemporary tendencies* by **Anete Ivo**, Universidad Federal de Bahía, Brazil; and *Poverty research in Latin America: paradigms in conflict* by **Carlos Barba Solano**, Universidad de Guadalajara, México.

The event was finalized with a broad debate about poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean where the audience participated.

A possible electronic publication of the papers is under evaluation by the CLACSO-CROP programme.

CROP SESSION AT NFU CONFERENCE

CROP organized the session *The Politics of Poverty Production, also a matter of Human Rights and Ethics* at the Norwegian Association for Development Research (NFU) Conference 2006: "Ethics, Human Rights and Development", 13-15 September, Oslo, Norway.

The aim of the session was to open up for new directions in poverty research through increased understanding of the concept of poverty production and the functioning of poverty producing processes, to explore the concept of poverty production and its relationship to other concepts in poverty research, to bring forward new understanding of actors involved in poverty production and the structures under which poverty production is given public space, and to provide new understanding of the dualities built into poverty production.

The following papers were presented:

- *Politics of poverty production, also a matter of human rights and ethics*, by **Else Øyen**, CROP Secretariat
- *Exploring the holistic linkages between poverty production and human rights abuses*, by **Kwadwo Appiagyei-Atua**, Faculty of Law, University of Ghana
- *The duality of globalization and poverty production and the role of corporate social responsibility*, by **Emilio Pérez Solla**, Argentina

NEW EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF CLACSO

The Brazilian political scientist, Dr. **Emir Sader**, Director of the Public Policy Laboratory (LLP) at Universidad del Estado de Río de Janeiro (UERJ) has been elected new Executive Secretary of CLACSO for 2007-2009. He will take over the position from Dr. **Atilio Boron** on December 1st. CROP sends its warmest congratulations to the new Executive Secretary elect and looks forward to continued close co-operation with CLACSO within the existing framework of the CLACSO-CROP programme as well as other joint initiatives between CLACSO and CROP.

We also wish to send our warmest regards and thanks to Dr. **Atilio Boron** for the many years of co-operation and support. He was a major actor in initiating and implementing the CLACSO-CROP programme, and through the enthusiastic support from Dr. **Boron** and his collaborators our partnership has resulted in a healthy and steady poverty research programme of notable excellence in the region.

editorial

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INFORMALITY AND POVERTY REDUCTION: A NEW PARADIGM

The informal sector and its impact on poverty reduction is still a subject of controversy. So, what gives rise to the renewed debate on this theme? The debate generally maintains four arguments recognized as turning points in this respect.

The first rests upon a misguided belief that is conceptually drawn from both the dualist and the legalist thought on informality; it describes the informal economy as marginal and to far off to be linked to the formal economy. The second argument views informal sector in an under-regulated state as a premium to fraud, thus depriving the state of needed resources. Yet, this thesis considers the informal sector as a predator causing losses of taxes, smuggling, under valuation of individual income, distortions and misallocation of resources. The third one regards it in an over regulated state as resulting from inefficiency brought about by heavy regulations and tax burdens. This belief is waning away and is giving credence to the fourth argument that stems from the fact that informal activities are witnessing a rapid expansion in both developed and underdeveloped countries. In such a situation, informal activities represent, first, a sizeable and stable proportion of GDP and employment and, second, they can enhance growth and help reducing poverty where the state fails to do so.

Two questions stem from the above categorizations: Is the expansion of the informal sector the result of fluctuations in economic activity or is it inherently structurally induced by under or over regulatory constraints and taxes?

From an empirical point of view, how is it to be measured? From an analytical angle, what are the pertinent explanatory factors embedded in a systemic approach? How can we be sure that transfer of informal activities to formal ones can reduce poverty?

Actually, from another angle, to get out of the poverty trap, a high proportion of protected but poor formal employees operate in informal activities, thus worsening through competition and substitution, living conditions of informal workers.

While the debate has been long, first, on the emphasis of the impacts of informal activities, and second, on the contribution of the informal sector to the economy as a whole, it remains short on unlocking policies that may enhance

NEW BOOKS IN *CROP INTERNATIONAL STUDIES IN POVERTY RESEARCH SERIES*:

Poverty and Social Deprivation in the Mediterranean Area - Trends, Policies & Welfare Prospects in the new Millennium

Maria Petmesidou and **Christos Papatheodorou** have edited the book.

Amidst the growth of regional identities worldwide, the Mediterranean Basin is beginning to emerge in scholarly circles and politically as an entity in its own right. The book is the product of a collaboration among social scientists around the entire Mediterranean littoral that has met at CROP workshops. Their work embraces Southern Europe, Turkey, The Balkans, North Africa, and the Near East. With new and up-to-date empirical material experts within the fields of economy, sociology and social policy document the changing profiles of poverty and social deprivation in the area, and compare the extent, severity and structural causes of poverty.

The book offers a critical overview of socio-cultural trends shared in common in the region and the wide diversity of development trajectories, patterns of global integration and impact of international strategies on deepening social polarization and poverty. A broad spectrum of public responses and policies to the challenges of poverty and social inequality in countries within EU, the transition economies of the Balkans, emerging advanced economies like Israel and Turkey, as well as the developing countries of North Africa are thoroughly discussed. The need for collaborative economic and social development and regional solutions to poverty is argued about and a case is made out for an alternative model to structural adjustment and welfare retrenchment that supports substantial redistribution and regional/international preventative action. Such a strategy is most urgently needed in the areas where civil conflict and open warfare have perilously affected living standards of populations and raised serious obstacles even to tracking poverty, as the cases of Palestine, Lebanon and the Western Balkans clearly demonstrate.

Eliminating Human Poverty: Macro-economic Policies for the Millennium Goals

Authors: Member of CROP Scientific Committee **Santosh K. Mehrotra** and **Enrique Delamonica**.

The book examines how basic social services, particularly education, health and water, can be financed and delivered more effectively and so departs from the dominant macro-economic paradigm. Drawing on their own broad-ranging research at UNICEF and UNDP the authors argue that fiscal, monetary, and other macro-economic policies for poverty reduction, human development and economic growth can be compatible with micro-level interventions to provide basic social services. Policymakers have more flexibility than is usually assumed to engage in macro-economic and growth-oriented policies that can also expand human capabilities and fulfill human rights. Strategic shifts in aid policy, decentralized governance, health and education and the private-public mix in service provision are a prerequisite to achieve the goals of human development and to eliminate human poverty within a generation.

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gradual transition for a strong, dynamic and positive articulation between productive informal and formal sectors for the purpose of poverty reduction. Though, in this case, experiences show that results are not satisfactory, we may consider that the shift from formal to informal activities and vice-versa may lead to a significant poverty reduction only through the elimination of the causes of production and reproduction of pov-

erty. While the main causes may be articulated around the notion of individual and collective cultural perception that embraces education in its larger sense, we recommend moreover, particularly for developing countries, to tackle dysfunctioning in norms, institutions and liberties in order to reduce poverty significantly. Only in this case can we reduce informality though a small part of it remains incompressible.

NEW POVERTY RESEARCH PROJECTS IN CROPNET

Members of the CROP network of poverty researchers (CROPnet) submit information about their on-going research. The following projects are the latest additions to the CROP database:

Africa:

- Drought and conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa: Is there a link?
- The Risk of HIV/AIDS among the poor rural dwellers in south-western Nigeria
- The means to live: Targeting poverty alleviation in South Africa to make children's rights real
- Legal tools for citizen empowerment in Africa

Latin America and the Caribbean:

- Endo-cultural development in the Pehuenche communities of Biobio highland, Chile
- Analysis of alternative experiences in the context of the failure of popular education in suburban areas of Buenos Aires

Asia:

- Social participation and poverty: Sociological analyses of community-based participation on poverty in Iran

Europe:

- Poverty and youth care [in Belgium]

Global:

- Overcoming extreme poverty with the poor themselves
- Migration and development
- Compulsory license on medication, the right to development and global poverty

Contact CROP if further information is wanted about the projects listed.

SOUTHERN AFRICAN REFERENCE MATERIAL ON DEVELOPMENT

Spanning the time period of the end of apartheid the SALDRU (Southern Africa Labour & Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town) *Collection of clippings 1975-2000* has been an important tool in assisting social scientists and academics to track data on South Africa and Southern Africa.

The collection is now available on DVD, for ordering information contact: badams@commerce.uct.ac.za

LIST OF CROP EVENTS 2006 - 2007

November 2006

21-23: *Urban Poverty and Social Exclusion*, CLACSO and CROP workshop in Mexico City, organised in co-operation with Instituto Investigaciones Sociales (IIS), UNAM and Universidad de Guadalajara.

February 2007

21-23: UNESCO & CROP *Small Grants Review* project meeting, in Lisbon, Portugal.

February 2007

CLACSO and CROP educational course in poverty studies for young Central American Researchers, in co-operation with FLACSO-Costa Rica and Centro de Documentación de Honduras (CEDOH), in Honduras.

Summer 2007

CLACSO and CROP workshop on *Poverty and Religion*, in Central-America/Caribbean.

Autumn 2007

CROP and Childwatch International workshop on *Poverty and Children*, in Oslo, Norway.

PUBLIC SERVICES IS CRUCIAL TO END POVERTY

In a recent report, *In the Public Interest*, from Oxfam International and WaterAid, it is argued that a strengthening of public services is vital for poverty reduction. The report emphasizes that "universal public service was the basis for today's prosperity in rich countries." Comparing life in Europe 100 years ago with modern-day Africa, Oxfam's policy advisor Max Lawson comments that "It was only through strong government-led programmes that we [Europeans] tackled disease and created an educated workforce, laying the foundations for the level of wealth we enjoy today." According to the two agencies it is only governments that have the possibility to provide public services in a manner which will have a real and lasting impact on the lives of millions of poor people.

The full report can be found online at: http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/debt_aid/public_interest.htm

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.

The CROP webpage is found at <http://www.crop.org>. The site holds general information about CROP, news about past and ongoing activities, as well as the latest CROP newsletter.

CROP has developed a database on poverty researchers (CROPnet), and documentation of ongoing research. If you wish to have your name listed in CROPnet, visit the CROP webpage at <http://www.crop.org/cropnet/register.cfm> and complete the online questionnaire.

SECRETARIAT STAFF:

Else Øyen, Scientific Director
Hans Egil Offerdal, Latin American Co-ordinator
Inge Erling Tesdal, Executive Officer

BWPI PHD SCHOLARSHIPS

Brooks World Poverty Institute (BWPI) at the University of Manchester, UK, offers PhD Scholarships in poverty research. Students of all nationalities can apply. Research topics can focus on any aspect of poverty analysis that has both academic and policy relevance. Candidates with disciplinary backgrounds in any relevant subject area are encouraged to apply.

A *BWPI Burnell-NAFUM PhD Scholarship in Poverty & the Environment* is also available. Priority for this scholarship will be given to students from non-OECD countries.

For more information about how to apply visit the BWPI website at: <http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/bwpi/postgradchol>

HUMAN RIGHTS RESOURCE

Human Rights Tools has been set up as a reference for researchers working in the field of human rights. It can be found at <http://www.humanrightstools.org>