

# CROP newsletter

Comparative Research Programme On Poverty

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## frontiers of poverty research

### **CHILD POVERTY: TOWARDS A RESEARCH AGENDA**

It's hard to visualize one billion children. However, standing side-by-side one meter apart, the developing world's poor children would wrap around the equator twenty-five times. Defined as children who are severely deprived of one or more basic human needs, the 56 percent child poverty rate in developing countries is even higher in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, and in rural areas (Gordon et al. 2003). Despite the depth and width of the problem, too often the plight of children is neglected in political and academic debates about poverty (Minujin et al. 2005). This exclusion is unacceptable for several reasons. First, these figures represent untold and desperate hardship. Children are also the innocent victims of poverty and suffer unduly from and are powerless with respect to policies targeted toward their parents, guardians, communities or economies. The condition of children not only shapes their own futures but also the future of their countries. The varied detrimental impacts of the poverty they face in childhood accumulate as they age into adulthood, increasing the likelihood that they will become the poor parents of tomorrow (Young Lives 2006). Young people who grow up in poor households are more likely to work as children, drop out of primary school (if attend at all), engage in risky sexual behaviour, marry and bear children early, and have a more difficult time finding stable and remunerative employment as adults (Lloyd 2005).

The age-old tragedies of war, famine, and disease continue to wreck the lives of vast

numbers of children. And poverty is not just about income. It is also, as one world religious leader said recently, about *resources not easy to quantify – the stability of a domestic or an educational environment, access to unpolluted natural space, familiarity with the practices and languages that offer access to human meaning*.<sup>1</sup>

In an effort to refocus attention on childhood poverty, and to facilitate dialogue across the CROP network, we briefly sketch broad research themes that require our attention. This list derives in part from a recent exchange between CROP-affiliated scholars with interests in this area, but it is not exhaustive. We view it as a point of departure for further discussion and development.

*Child development.* Undernourishment, environmental risks, and other correlates of poverty have negative implications for children's development. Advances in environmental science and neuroscience could be brought to bear on the social and physical environments of impoverished children in relation to their cognitive and social development. The cumulative impact of impaired cognitive ability on later life social and economic outcomes also requires greater attention among researchers.

*Child poverty and policy.* We recognize the fact that in some countries more children have risen above poverty and that India and China are experiencing an explosion of economic growth. At the same time we should

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remember that income inequality between and within many countries is increasing and that the capacity of the have-nots to make it to the global economy diminishes as the price of entry gets higher in terms of education, skill levels and levels of capital investment. The causes of poverty are internal and external to any particular country. Key internal causes include absence of natural resources, corruption, civil strife, and massive within-country income inequality. Externally, unfair trade agreements, and large cuts in domestic spending demanded by international lending organizations as part of the Washington Consensus, contribute to child poverty. Conditionalities and other strategies to poverty alleviation need to be evaluated relative to their impact on child poverty.

*Children, education and participation in the household economy.* For many years, researchers have been concerned about children working to the detriment of their education and sometimes their health. While it is true that children contribute in important ways to the household economy, they suffer long-term effects of early entry into the work force. Some forms of child labour can inculcate useful skills but many forms of child labour do not prepare children for the level of skills demanded in a globally competitive job market. Age and the type of work are critical factors in determining whether child labour yields a net advantage to the child. While enrolment at elementary school levels has been increasing in many countries, the quality of that education is sometimes so low as not to increase students' chances of a decent job. In addition, during the transition from elementary school to secondary school, many young people drop out of the formal education system.

*Violence.* In many countries, low-income children and youth are concentrated in intensely poor communities with high levels of drug-related violence, an absence of effective policing and high youth homicide rates. According to the latest U.N. study on violence (Pinheiro 2006), economic status, age, sex and gender are among the many factors associated with the risk of lethal violence. World Health Organization estimates suggest that the rate of homicide of children in 2002 was twice as high in low-income countries than high-income countries. The highest child homicide rates occur among adolescents aged 15 to 17 years (3.28 for girls, 9.06 for boys).

*Multiple jeopardies.* The intensified vulnerability of children caused by the confluence of poverty and other problems is wor-

thy of greater attention by researchers. Notable here is the HIV/AIDS pandemic which intensifies child poverty by threatening the ability of parents to provide for them, and exposes children to the risk of becoming orphaned. Discrimination based on gender, ethnicity or caste can have an especially vicious impact on poor children.

*Methodological issues.* Deficiencies in orthodox, income-based, measures of poverty are well-recognized. While myriad alternative multidimensional indicators have been developed (e.g., that used by Gordon et al., 2003), an evaluation of diverse poverty indicators for purposes of understanding the contours of child poverty is needed. Concepts such as inequality, vulnerability, exclusion, capabilities, and so forth need to be considered, along with applicability and relevance of child poverty indicators across different regional contexts.

#### Notes:

1) Rt. Rev. Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, *Christianity, Islam and the Challenge of Poverty*, speech to the Bosniak Institute, Sarajevo, May, 2005, [<http://tinyurl.com/yzpnmv>]

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Young Lives: An International Study of Childhood Poverty (2006) *Why Focus on Children?*, [<http://tinyurl.com/yn3sr6>]

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## NEW CROP SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR

After 15 years in charge of CROP **Else Øyen** retired at ISSC's 26th General Assembly that was held in Alexandria, Egypt, in November. **Tom Skauge** is elected new Scientific Director of CROP.

**Skauge** is Dr. Polit and brings with him work-experience from the University of Bergen and Bergen University College. He has also been Head of Section at the Norwegian Centre for Int. Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU) where he was responsible for NORAD fellowship programmes and NUFU programmes.

## CROP SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE 2007-2008

The new CROP Scientific Committee was elected at ISSC's 26th General Assembly:

- **CHAIR:** Dr. **Atilio Boron** CLACSO, Argentina
- **VICE-CHAIR:** Prof. **Lucy Williams**, Northeastern Univ. School Of Law, USA
- **VICE-CHAIR:** Senior Consultant **Santosh Mehrotra**, Rural Development, Planning Commission, Government of India, India
- Dr. **Juan Manuel Arbona**, Bryn Mawr College/Univ. para la Investigación Estratégica en Bolivia (UPIEB), USA/Bolivia
- Dr. **Fatima Adamu**, Usmanu Dan Fodiyo Univ., Nigeria
- Prof. **Abderrezak Benhabib**, Abou-Bekr Belkaïd Univ., Tlemcen, Algeria
- Dr. **Blandine Destremau**, French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), France
- Prof. **Layi Erinosh**, Olabisi Onabanjo Univ., Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria
- Prof. **Leif Jensen**, The Pennsylvania State Univ., USA
- Prof. **Karima Korayem**, AlAzhar Univ., Egypt
- Prof. **Murray Leibbrandt**, Saldrú, Univ. of Cape Town, South Africa
- Prof. **Ragnhild Lund**, Norwegian Univ. of Science and Technology, Norway
- Exec. Director **Penina Mlama**, Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE), Kenya
- Exec. Secretary **Adebayo Olukoshi**, CODESRIA, Senegal
- Prof. **Peter Saunders**, Univ. of New South Wales, Australia
- Dir. **Arjun Sengupta**, Center for Development and Human Rights, India
- Dir. **Carlos Sojo**, FLACSO, Costa Rica
- Prof. **Du Xiaoshan**, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), China
- Prof. **Alicia Ziccardi**, Inst. de Investigaciones Sociales (ISS-UNAM), Mexico

CROP welcomes the new committee and looks very much forward to working with it.

## editorial

Prof. Francis Wilson,

Chair of CROP 2001-06

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### CHANGING OF THE GUARD

It was my singular good fortune to have been drawn into the CROP network by Else Øyen just as it was beginning, and to have been chairperson of the Scientific Committee for the past six years. Reflecting on the journey that so many of us have made together I can only hope that the next generation will be as enriched as we have been by the experience.

In his recent path-breaking book on *The Wealth of Networks* (Yale University Press, 2006) Yochai Benkler argues in his conclusion that:

"As new strategies for the production of information and knowledge are making their outputs available freely for use and continuing innovation by everyone everywhere, the networked information economy can begin to contribute significantly to human development."

And that surely is precisely why CROP as conceived with such vision by Else Øyen at the end of the 1980s and led so powerfully by her during the first fifteen years of its existence has emerged as so significant a research structure within such a short space of time. For the essence of CROP, working with minimal resources and an even smaller administrative office, has been to generate intellectual wealth by means of the global networking that is now possible as a result of the technological innovations of the past twenty years.

The energy generated by the networking synergy of different people working in all corners of the globe on the similar tough research questions that are raised wherever poverty is confronted, has been quite astonishing. As researchers meet on the internet and then consolidate that meeting at small face-to-face CROP workshops [or vice versa] a genuine community of scholars, of more than one generation, is emerging. It is one whose members could surely play an important role in the years to come as "public intellectuals", drawing experience and insights from around the world, in the ever more urgent global debate that is needed about a poverty phenomenon which Else Øyen has characterised as "huge, deep and penetrating". "We need", she argues, "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."

As CROP continues to grow and to draw in co-workers from south and north, east and west, in an ever richer network we can hope that the

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### CROP & Childwatch International Research Network

convene an international academic workshop:

### RETHINKING POVERTY AND CHILDREN IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM: LINKING RESEARCH AND POLICY

Oslo, Norway, September 17-19, 2007

This workshop is organised jointly by **CROP** (Comparative Research Programme on Poverty) and the **Childwatch International Research Network**. It will focus on the nexus between children and poverty and how it affects, not only the children suffering from the hardship of poverty in all its aspects, but also the development of generations and the future of countries and continents. Further, it is important that new research is brought to the attention of policy makers in the field, be that national governments, NGOs and/or the international community as such. Hence, the workshop will also seek to establish a real dialogue between researchers and practitioners.

The organizers calls for high quality research papers and contributions/best practices analyzing the impact of poverty on children in context, as well as innovative, research based, proposals for possible policy solutions. Themes called for include, but are not limited to:

- *Child development* (under nourishment, environmental risks)
- *Children and poverty alleviation policies; children and violence* (crime, war)
- *Children and education; children and work; children and health* (including cognitive development)
- *Children and labour*
- *Causes and indicators of child poverty in developed and developing countries*
- *Methodological issues in the study of poverty and children*

Comparative and interdisciplinary approaches drawing on multiple theories will be given preference.

The workshop will be limited to 25 participants. Preference will be given to younger scholars. All participants will be expected to take part in the proceedings (in English), by either presenting or discussing papers. Participants bear the responsibility of their own funding. However, a limited number of travel grants are available. The grants will be awarded according to geography (researchers from "developing" countries will be prioritized), and the relevance, quality and originality of the abstract/paper. Details on how to apply for travel grants will be forwarded to those authors whose proposed paper is accepted for the workshop. As a rule, accommodation will be covered for all participants during the workshop.

### THE DEADLINE FOR ABSTRACTS IS APRIL 11, 2007

The abstract should include the title of the proposed paper, a summary of the main theme or argument which should indicate the theoretical framework(s), methodology and preliminary findings, and should not exceed ONE PAGE (A4). Please remember to indicate which one (or more) of the above topics the proposed paper covers. **IMPORTANT:** A brief CV including a list of your most recent publications should accompany the abstract. Please state clearly your name, title, nationality, full postal and e-mail address, telephone and fax numbers. The abstract and CV should be sent to: [crop@uib.no](mailto:crop@uib.no)

Abstract-givers will be notified by May 15th, 2007 whether their proposed papers have been accepted or not, 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 1st, 2007).

research and the writing, the insights and the recommendations generated about mass poverty in the midst of global wealth will begin to make a significant difference to the well-being of our fragile planet.

*CROP thanks Prof. Wilson and the outgoing members of the Scientific Committee for all the valuable work they have contributed to CROP to further develop the agenda of poverty research worldwide.*

## CLACSO-CROP/ISS-UNAM WORKSHOP IN MEXICO

More than 30 international academics joined together at the CLACSO-CROP/IIS-UNAM workshop *Urbanization of Poverty and New Forms of Social Exclusion* in Mexico City, 21-23 November. The scholars presented and reflected on experiences which might give impetus to revised public policies in urban areas, focusing on how urban poverty and social exclusion constitute a central element of the 'social question' in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Professor **Joan Subirats**, Director of the Institute for Government and Public Policies at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, inaugurated the workshop with the lecture *Do territories of social exclusion exist? Spatial factors of poverty and social exclusion. A reflection from Spain and Europe*.

During the workshop, the academic panels focused on "Urban poverty, inequality and social exclusion", "Work, salary and social security", "Citizenship, violence and political exclusion", "Strategies for surviving in populated areas" and "Territory, social exclusion and urban segregation". Here, studies from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and Uruguay were displayed and debated among the academic experts.

The workshop closed with a public roundtable which included leading scholars from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). This session contained presentations on various aspects of poverty in Mexico by **Rolando Cordera**, Department of Economy; **Paulette Dieterlen**, Department of Philosophy; **Adolfo Sanchez Almanza**, Department of Economy and **Héctor Castillo** and **Alicia Ziccardi** from UNAM's Institute for Social Research. **Cristina Sanchez Mejorada** from the Metropolitan Autonomous University (UAM) was also a special invitee to this panel, in which more than 85 people participated.

The workshop was a joint venture of the CLACSO-CROP Programme and the Institute of Social Research (IIS-UNAM). DGAPA-UNAM, PAPIIT-UNAM and NORAD provided necessary financing for this event.

For a full listing of the all the papers presented please see the CROP webpage.

## LIST OF EVENTS 2007

### February

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

### February/March

26/2-2/3: 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.

### July

4-6: *Poverty, Religion and Social Justice in Latin America and the Caribbean*, workshop organized by CLACSO, CROP, CES, FLACSO-RD, in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

### August

6-18: University Summer School on *Poverty and Human Rights*, held during the summer term at the University of Bergen, Norway.

### September

17-19: *Rethinking Poverty and Children in the new Millennium: Linking Research and Policy*, workshop organized by CROP and Childwatch International Research Network, in Oslo, Norway.

## NEW BOOK IN POVERTY RESEARCH

The Policy Press is publishing a new book on *The Idea of Poverty* by long time CROP collaborator Dr. **Paul Spicker**. He holds the Grampian Chair of Public Policy at the Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen and is the Director of the Centre for Public Policy and Management.

The book examines views about what poverty is and what should be done about it. "Poverty" means many different things to different people - for example, material deprivation, lack of money, dependency on benefits, social exclusion or inequality. In the book **Spicker** argues for a participative, inclusive understanding of the term.

Contact The Policy Press for more information about the book, E-mail: [Jessica.Hughes@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:Jessica.Hughes@bristol.ac.uk), [<http://tinyurl.com/y432sz>]

## 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:

Scientific Director **Tom Skauge**  
Latin Am. Co-ordinator **Hans Egil Offerdal**  
Executive Officer **Inge Erling Tesdal**

## NEW PRESIDENT OF ISSC

Prof. **Gudmund Hernes** was elected President of ISSC at the 26th General Assembly, in Alexandria, Egypt.

**Hernes** has been professor in sociology at the University of Bergen, Director and Coordinator of UNESCO's HIV/AIDS programmes, and has served in numerous posts in the norwegian government including *Minister of Education, Research and Church Affairs* and *Minister of Health and Social Affairs*. He is currently a researcher at FAFO in Oslo, Norway.

CROP looks very much forward to working with Prof. **Hernes**.

## SEASONS GREETINGS



We wish all our contributors,  
supporters and friends  
a peaceful and happy  
New Year 2007