

newsletter

Comparative Research Programme On Poverty

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frontiers of poverty research

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INTO THE WILDERNESS?: POVERTY RESEARCH IN AUSTRALIA

In retrospect, the pledge by former Prime Minister Bob Hawke in 1987 to 'end child poverty by 1990' was a watershed in Australian poverty research. It focused attention (and intense political pressure) on whether the poverty statistics would confirm or refute the Prime Minister's commitment. They were never going to be up to the task. First, because data from the next household income survey would not become available until well after the next federal election was due in 1990. Secondly, because the methods used to estimate poverty - based on the poverty line developed by the Poverty Commission in the 1970s (the Henderson poverty line) - came under attack from those with an interest in discrediting the poverty statistics in case they indicated that child poverty (or any other poverty) still existed in 1990.

There has been an improvement in the availability of household income data since then, with the previous five-yearly collection cycle replaced by an annual survey in 1995 (although this has since been partly reversed). However, poverty research has not recovered from the attack on the Henderson poverty line. Rather than acknowledging that the original poverty line had some defects that needed removing, the poverty debate has seen a series of very public disputes over the poverty statistics that have undermined the credibility of all poverty research.

The current conservative federal

government, elected in 1996, has focused its attention on reforming the 'welfare system' (social security provision to those of working age) by introducing measures designed to reduce 'welfare dependency' by encouraging - at times requiring - beneficiaries to take active steps to find work. The parameters of this approach were broadened in response to the report of a Reference Group on Welfare Reform that emphasised 'participation' rather than employment as the goal of reform, where participation was defined to include not only economic activities like employment, training or job search, but also social activities such as voluntary work and socially valued caring.

The report also made passing reference to the need to maintain the adequacy of social benefits, but there was no mention of poverty as such and the official silence on this issue was maintained. We are thus currently faced with a situation in which what is acknowledged to be one of the most highly targeted social security systems in the industrial world - a classic example of the social assistance approach to social security - exists in a country that has no way of monitoring its effectiveness in reducing or preventing poverty - the primary goal of any social assistance scheme.

Although the federal government has eradicated the word poverty from its vocabulary, several State governments have undertaken reviews of poverty policy, while leading welfare agencies like The Smith Family and the St Vincent de Paul Society have commissioned studies of poverty in order to raise public awareness of the issue. The Brotherhood of St Laurence - an organisation whose interest in poverty pre-

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dates the Poverty Commission – has also undertaken some interesting research on attitudes to the definition, cause and consequences of poverty among different groups in the community.

These efforts have had mixed success. The release earlier this year by The Smith Family of a report on trends in poverty in the 1990s prompted a scathing attack on the credibility of the estimates by a group based at the pro-market, anti-government think-tank the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS). The results presented in The Smith Family report had been produced by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM), who used a poverty line set equal to one-half of average (equivalised) household income rather than a more conventional one-half of median income line, or the Henderson poverty line.

Using the half-average income approach, poverty had increased from 11.3 per cent in 1990 to 13.0 per cent in 2000, a finding that challenged the prevailing orthodoxy that the strong economic growth experienced over the 1990s was guaranteed to reduce the poverty rate. However, as the CIS group noted, the estimated increase in poverty virtually disappears if the half-median measure is used, the poverty rate on this basis rising from 8.2 to 8.7 per cent. (Using the Henderson poverty line, poverty increased from 12.0 per cent to 20.8 per cent, with the variation between the different estimates reflecting increased inequality and differences in how the poverty line is updated).

Underlying these debates over the poverty statistics are important issues relating to how the measurement of poverty should adjust to the changing social, economic and

policy context that have re-awakened old debates about the relationship between poverty and inequality. As noted above, inequality has increased, particularly in the 1980s and first half of the 1990, and the attention this has drawn has been at the expense of any interest in poverty.

There are encouraging signs in the emergence of social participation as a factor to be considered in the welfare reform debate, though it is too early to reflect on how much impact this will have. The issue of social capital has also attracted the interest of researchers and government (the former in part reflecting the funding priorities of the latter) with considerable effort being put into trying to understand why some communities deal better with economic adversity than others.

This can be partly explained by political concern over the viability of regional and rural communities and the growing disparities between the economic circumstances of those based in the major cities and those living in 'the bush'. Rural poverty has always been an issue in Australia, although the intense political concern surrounding it has not been backed by research on the extent and nature of rural poverty. There is a pressing need for poverty to be put back onto the national policy agenda. However, the current political and policy climate in Australia suggests that it may be some time before this happens.

Professor **Peter Saunders** is the Director of the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. His latest book, *The Ends and Means of Welfare. Coping With Economic and Social Change in Australia* was published by Cambridge University Press in July 2002.

IDEA SIXTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ETHICS AND DEVELOPMENT

The International Development Ethics Association (IDEA) held its Sixth International conference on ethics and development *Poverty Corruption and Human Rights: Ethics of Citizenship and Public Service* in Zamorano, Honduras, June 19-22. The conference was sponsored by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras/ Central American Graduate Program in Economics and Development, the Citizens Forum, the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy, School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland, and the World Bank. The Panamerican Agricultural School El Zamorano, CROP, the American Embassy in Honduras, and the Honduran Ministries of art, culture and sports and tourism were other collaborators.

The conference was inaugurated by the President of the Republic of Honduras **Ricardo Maduro**, the president of the organizing committee, **Ramon Romero**, IDEA's president **David Crocker**, and the Chairman of the Central American Graduate School on Economics and Development, of the National Autonomous University of Honduras, Dr. **Alcides Hernandez**. Spanish philosopher, **Adela Cortina**, was the keynote speaker. 37 papers were presented during the conference. There were four plenary sessions and 8 parallel sessions.

Visit the IDEA website at <http://www.development-ethics.org> to read the full report from the conference.

UNDP HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2002

The UNDP *Human Development Report 2002: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World* can be read by visiting <http://www.undp.org/hdr2002/> on Internet.

NEW BOOK ON POVERTY

Search for Solutions, a collection of essays by long time CROP contributor Yogesh Atal, has been published by Rawat Publications.

The essays raise several issues related to poverty. Rather than providing any readymade recipe for solving the complex problem of poverty, the book invites its readership in the search for solutions that are possible.

For ordering information contact: Rawat Publications, Satyam Apartments, Sector 3, Jawahar Nagar, Jaipur 302 004, INDIA, E-mail: info@rawatbooks.com

CROP SPECIAL SESSIONS AT ISA XVth WORLD CONGRESS

CROP organised two sessions at the International Sociological Association (ISA) XVth World Congress of Sociology in Brisbane, Australia, July 7-13, *Issues in pro-poor policies in non-OECD countries* and *Reforming the welfare state in Latin America*

Prof. **Georges Midré**, Department of Sociology, University of Tromsø, Norway, chaired the session.

The following papers were presented:

-*Addressing the alleviation of poverty through social welfare measures* by **Marius Olivier**, Rand Afrikaans University, South Africa and **Linda Jansen van Rensburg**, Potchefstroom University, South Africa.

-*Creating linkages between international donors and the poor. ADB's Role on Recent Poverty Reduction in Indonesia* by **Ivanovich Augusta**, Bogor Agricultural

University, Indonesia.

-*Pro-Poor Policies in Egypt; Identification and assessment* by **Karima Korayem**, Egypt.

-*New economic reforms and adverse effect on the poor* by **K. Gopal Iyer**, Panjab University, India.

-*The effectiveness of social policies in developing countries and international financial institutions: the political economy dimension* by **Alice-Nicole Sindzingre**, CNRS, France.

-*Ladino elites, public policies and indigenous poverty in Guatemala* by **Georges Midré**.

-*Social Policy in the Mexican transition* by **Freddy Mariñez Navarro**, ITESM, Mexico.

This paper was distributed at the session:

-*Health municipal council and its counsellors: what is this plot?* by **Ione Morita**, Faculdade de Medicina de Botucatu/UNESP, Brazil.

editorial

NEW CO-ORDINATOR FOR CLACSO/CROP PROGRAMME

I have recently taken over the Norwegian end of the CLACSO/CROP Programme for Poverty Research in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this role I hope to contribute not only to the expansion of research on poverty in this region, but the expansion of an awareness of the interest and concern this area of the world is due.

Over the last decade Latin America has been through a series of transformations. With the expansion of democratic government and institutional acceptance of political and cultural rights that there have been signs of hope for the poor and marginalised people in the region. Throughout the region there has been talk of national dialogue, participation and inclusion. However, whilst political openings have occurred, the changes in economic policy and the actions of government at the national and local levels undermine many of the new democratic commitments and show them to have little practical significance off the pages of the statute books. Although there are some localised signs of poverty reduction in the area, in general the gap between rich and poor shows a marked increase¹. The voices and needs of the poor may now be heard, but there are few signs of Latin American governments being interested listeners. Indeed, my own research demonstrates the way in which recent reforms for state-sponsored participatory development and decentralisation in Bolivia, act not to empower local people, but to strengthen existing power structures and complicate their external governance². At the international level there are healthy debates and signs of reflection on past development failures, but technocratic models for restructuring and planning remain in place changed only by the addition of foreign models for governance and accountability.

The new meeting places in Latin America between civil society and states are important, but with so few results it is obvious that something more must be done. Over the next year the priority for research in the CLACSO/CROP Programme is "Poverty Reduction and the Role of the State in Poverty Reduction". The in-depth knowledge of governmental systems and their impacts on poverty the research generates will help to identify and combat old prejudices and move beyond the present rhetoric of democratisation to genuine efforts to implement pro-poor policies. My role in CROP is to give this process as much assistance as possible and to open up possibilities for the expansion of other equally important areas of poverty research in Latin American and the Caribbean.

I look forward very much to working with all of the scholars within the CROP network and especially (*continues on page 4*)

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

CROP in collaboration with the Department of Social Administration of Democritus University of Thrace (Komotini, Greece) intends to create an interdisciplinary working group of experts on the analysis of poverty, social deprivation and anti-poverty strategies in the Mediterranean area (South Europe and particularly South-Eastern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East), with the aim to prepare a publication on the following theme:

POVERTY AND SOCIAL DEPRIVATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA:

The local, national/regional and global dimension

We invite an expression of interest from academics, researchers and policy experts specializing in poverty research, inequality and social deprivation, policy reducing strategies and impact analysis, in the Mediterranean area. Proposed contributions can:

- explore poverty problems and poverty reduction policies in one country,
- undertake a comparative analysis of two or more countries of the area,
- examine the impact of global processes on Mediterranean countries (or specific regions in the area) and the role of international (supra) national agencies, from the point of view of poverty production/poverty reduction.
- Outline frontiers of research on poverty in the area

In summer 2003 a workshop will be organized in Democritus University (date to be determined) in which the papers prepared by the participants in this working group will be presented and discussed. The workshop will give the opportunity for collaborative work on the theoretical/conceptual and methodological coherence of the contributions to the volume and the elaboration of a common comparative framework.

When the working group is formed a background paper on the aims and structure of this collective volume (with an emphasis on concept definitions, thematic coverage and methodological options) will be circulated to contributors, together with more specific editorial details for the preparation of their papers.

At present the themes on which we invite contributions are fairly broad:

- Macro-analysis of socio-economic development processes, inequalities and poverty in specific countries or regions of the area – Trajectories of change (and transition, i.e. in the ex-communist Balkan countries) and how these affect poverty and social deprivation.
- Globalization, the logic of market economy and poverty – The role of international (supranational) agencies
- Definitions of poverty in use by different actors – Measurement (objective and subjective) of absolute and overall poverty - Static and dynamic perspectives – Explanations of poverty
- Resources, assets, institutions and the dynamics of socio-economic inequalities, deprivation and poverty
- Profile of the poor and household/individual trajectories
- Communities/localities: poverty risks and collective action - Informal systems of support
- Minorities, immigration trends and poverty phenomena
- Child poverty and the gender dimension of social deprivation
- Policy (& administration) traditions, welfare entitlements and policy change
- The links between policies and poverty trends

The deadline for an expression of interest is 10 October 2002

The expressions of interest must include:

- a short CV with a list of your more recent publications (your name, title, full postal and electronic address, telephone and fax numbers should be clearly stated).
- an abstract for a paper proposal defining as succinctly as possible the main theme of your contribution, indicating theory, main hypotheses/main argument(s), methods, types of data to be used and preliminary findings. The abstract should be about 800 words.

The abstract and CV should be sent (preferably by e-mail) to the following addresses:

- **Inge TESDAL**, CROP Secretariat, Fosswinkelsgate 7, N-5007 Bergen, Norway, tel.: +47-5558-9744, fax: +47-5558-9745, E-mail: crop@uib.no
- **Maria PETMESIDOU**, Dept. of Social Administration, Democritus University of Thrace, 1 P. Tsaldari, Komotini 69100, Greece, tel.: +30310238591, or +30531030833, fax: +30310280913, E-mail: mpetmes@socadm.duth.gr
- **Christos PAPATHEODOROU**, Dept. of Social Administration, Democritus University of Thrace, 1 P. Tsaldari, Komotini 69100, Greece, tel.: +30107489131, ext. 506, E-mail: cpapatheo@ekke.gr

Notification of acceptance of proposed contributions will be sent by early November 2002.

The deadline for the submission of papers (of approximately 7500 words) is 15 June 2003.

(*Editorial continued from page 4*)

to building a strong professional relationship with our partners in the Latin American Social Science Research Council (CLACSO). I invite poverty researchers in the area to contact me directly, to send me their ideas and engage me in dialogue. This will not only help me keep updated in terms of regional interests and concerns, but help me establish an open communication channel for the assistance of poverty researchers in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Aprovecho la ocasión para saludar ustedes muy atentamente.

John McNeish

(E-mail: john.mcneish@sif.uib.no)

Notes:

¹ Wodon, Q.T. "Poverty and Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean" A Regional Study. World Bank 2000.

² "Pueblo Chico, Infierno Grande: Globalisation and the Politics of Participation in Highland Bolivia" Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London 2001.

NEW REPORT FOCUSES ON NGOS

Nazneen Kanji, Carla Braga and Winnie Mitullah have written the report *Promoting Land Rights in Africa: How do NGOs make a Difference?*

The report is based on a study of seven NGOs promoting land reform and land rights in Mozambique and Kenya. It discusses the activities and relationships NGOs engage in to influence policy and suggests a framework for assessment.

The report is published by International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and can be downloaded from their webpage at <http://www.iied.org>.

INITIATIVE FOR POLICY DIALOGUE

The Initiative for Policy Dialogue (IPD) is a global network of economists and social scientists. It is established by Nobel prize winner **Joseph Stiglitz** as a non-profit organization to help developing and transition countries explore economic policy alternatives.

One of IPD's objectives is to promote research to improve the intellectual foundation for the debate on development issues.

For more information contact: IPD, Columbia University, 1403 International & Public Affairs Building, 420 West 118th Street, New York, NY 10027, USA, E-mail: information@policydialogue.org, Internet: <http://www.gsb.columbia.edu/ipd/>

LIST OF CROP EVENTS 2002-2003

November 2002

4-6: *Poverty reducing strategies in the Caribbean - with particular emphasis on external actors and their impact on poverty formation in the area.* A joint CROP, CLACSO, Centro de Investigaciones Psicológicas y Sociales (CIPS), and Centro de Investigaciones de la Economía Internacional (CIEI) workshop, Havana, Cuba.

December 2002

9-11: CROP organises a special session on *Poverty Producing Processes* at the ISSC 50th Anniversary, Vienna, Austria.

March 2003

19-21: *The Role of the State in the Struggle Against Poverty.* A joint CROP, CLACSO and Fundação Joaquim Nabuco (FJN) workshop, in Recife, Brazil.

Summer 2003

Poverty and Social Deprivation in the Mediterranean Area. See page 3 for details.

CALL FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS

International Foundation for Science (IFS) is an international organisation whose objective is to strengthen research capacity in developing countries by supporting talented young scientists in their early careers. IFS has traditionally supported projects within the natural sciences, but is now accepting research proposals from social scientists whose work addresses social or economic relationships important in the conservation, production, and/or renewable utilisation of the biological resource base.

For more information see the IFS webpage at <http://www.ifs.se> or contact Pirkko Tolamo, IFS, Grev Turegatan 19, SE-11438 Stockholm, SWEDEN, E-mail: pirkko.tolamo@ifs.se.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POVERTY

Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC) is convening an international conference on *Staying poor: Chronic poverty and development policy* at the University of Manchester, UK, 7-9 April 2003.

For more information about the conference visit the CPRC webpage at <http://www.chronicpoverty.org/conference.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. CROP has developed a database on poverty researchers, and documentation of ongoing research.

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

Please note: We cannot 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.

WEBPAGE FOR CROP

Those who have an Internet connection and a WWW browser programme installed on the computer, can find the CROP webpage 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.

AT THE CROP SECRETARIAT YOU WILL MEET:

Else Øyen, Scientific Director of CROP

Kirsti Thesen Sælen, Co-ordinator

John McNeish, Lat. Am. Co-ordinator/
Researcher

Inge Erling Tesdal, Executive Officer

Asuncion St. Clair, Research Fellow

THE QUOTE

Society cares for the individual only so far as he is profitable

Simone De Beauvoir
(The Coming of Age, 1970)