

CROP newsletter

Comparative Research Programme On Poverty

Vol. 9, No. 4, November 2002

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POVERTY RESEARCH IN HUNGARY

The transformation of Central European society in the 1990s raises a number of exciting issues for the social sciences. The reasons for this are that in a new situation earlier hypotheses can now be examined under "laboratory" circumstances. It was previously difficult to test the validity of economic and social explanations for the similarities and differences between Western and Socialist countries. The issue of poverty was particularly difficult. There have been many signs that the issue of poverty has come to the surface now that social differences have greatly increased over the last decade. Research on the production of poverty can be grouped by the different data-bases that are now being used for international comparative study.

Zsuzsa Ferge and István Kemény started the study of poverty in the area during the late 1960s. In the socialist era this topic was considered delicate in political terms. Raising the issue of poverty implied considerable risks and its research faced considerable difficulties. It was not even possible to use the word "poverty" in debates on the topic and the term was replaced by the euphemism "multiple disadvantageous situation". To circumvent these limitations Kemény and his colleagues examined the problem of poverty in combination with ethnicity (primarily the Gypsy problem in Hungary). In addition to the use of questionnaires, qualitative methods were also used. While Ferge and her research group placed the political and socio-political analyses of poverty in focus. Following the democratic

transformations of the 1990s both of these researchers further developed their earlier hypotheses.

In their studies they wanted to know whether or not poverty had increased with the transition to democracy, and aimed to identify the institutional reasons responsible for change. They also wanted to identify the means by which poverty could be reduced in these new conditions. Kemény stressed the way in which poverty was connected to culture and ethnicity, while Ferge laid emphasis on the operation of socio-political institutions and their reproduction of poverty.

Since 1963 the Central Statistical Office has been carrying out income surveys in Hungary on a regular five-year basis. This provides the most reliable data-base on poverty in Hungary. Regular calculation of subsistence level started in 1984. When analysing these figures in 1987, Rudolf Andorka came to the conclusion that the sociological composition of poverty in the country had been considerably transformed. These results were also mirrored by the work of Júlia Szalai who wrote "while the typical poor people of the sixties were relatively old villagers, who lived alone or with their spouses on pensions or other social benefits, the typical poor people of the eighties were members of urban families, relatively young, who were bringing up several children".

The Hungarian Household Panel Survey was started in 1992 and repeated each year by the Social Research Institute of Hungary (TÁRKI). It offers both a cross-sectional and longitudinal examination of poverty as well as an international comparative

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examination. With the TÁRKI data researchers are able to simultaneously work with several kinds of poverty indices. This means that it is possible to examine poverty according to both subsistence level and the distribution of income. In their data the researchers found that the chances of poverty is directly proportional to the number of children living in the family. The increase in income inequalities produced after the democratic transformation were formed in such a way that on average the position of the poor is the same, but more people from the middle-classes have sunk into poverty.

Ivan Szelenyi and his research team have carried out the latest research on poverty in Central Europe (Poverty, Ethnicity and Gender in Transitional Societies 1999-2002). Their research was based on statistical data generated by surveys conducted in six post-communist countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia and Slovakia between 1999 and 2000. In addition to survey data, qualitative information was gathered in the form of ethnographic studies conducted in the same countries. In each country extremely poor communities were selected for study. The Ford Foundation provided funding for both research components. In each of the six countries research was based on the observation that the extent and the character of poverty in Eastern Europe appear to have changed as a result of the change from a Socialist to a market economy. There has not only been a substantial increase in the proportion of the population living in extreme poverty, but the character of that poverty has changed. During socialism poverty was mainly a life-cycle phenomenon. Thus, families with large numbers of young children, the temporary or permanently disabled, and the elderly tended to be the poor in the past. Today, however, social class, ethnicity and/or gender appear to play a more significant role in terms of predicting or explaining poverty. In addition, with the emergence of the market economy an increasing number of people became locked into their poverty, and the spatial segregation of the extremely poor became more pronounced. As a result, the post-communist period seems to have produced "new poverty". Stated in simple terms, post-communism may be responsible for the formation of an "underclass", especially in those instances where poverty has become racialized. However, it must be added, that there are substantial differences from country to country in the nature, degree and dynamics of poverty in post-communist societies of Central Europe.

In addition to research directly concerned with the identification and measurement of poverty, there are other poverty oriented

trends in research. For example, the Urban Sociology Research Centre at the Eötvös University in Budapest has made some surveys of urban poverty, in which attempts have been made to explain the reasons and consequences of segregation.

POVERTY REDUCING STRATEGIES IN THE CARIBBEAN

CROP and Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO), Centro de Investigaciones Psicológicas y Sociales (CIPS) and Centro de Investigaciones de la Economía Internacional (CIEI) organised the workshop "Poverty Reducing strategies in the Caribbean – with particular emphasis on external actors and their impact on poverty formation in the area" in Havana, Cuba, November 4-6.

The workshop is a follow-up of the CLACSO/CROP workshops on "Demography of Poverty in Latin America" (Buenos Aires 2000) and "Indigenous Populations and Poverty: Multi-disciplinary Approaches" (Guatemala 2001), and is part of the joint CLACSO/CROP project on "Strengthening Poverty Reduction Programs in Less Developed Countries and Regions of Latin America and the Caribbean (2001-2004)."

The workshop was planned by a programme committee consisting of **Rhoda Reddock** (University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago), **Laura Tavares** (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), Brazil), **José Lázaro Hernández** (CIPS), **Lázaro Peña** (CIEI) and **Atilio Boron** (CLACSO). The main sponsors of the event was the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and the International Social Science Council (ISSC)/UNESCO.

The workshop was opened by **Lina Domínguez**, Vice-Minister of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA), **José Lázaro Hernández**, Director of CIPS, and **Lázaro Peña**, Director of CIEI. Scientific Director of CROP, Prof. **Else Øyen**, presented the opening lecture on *The need for a new discourse on poverty producing forces*.

The following special presentations were given:

- *Consideraciones sobre la pobreza en República Dominicana*, by **Mario Bonetti**, President of the Science Academy of the Dominican Republic
- *¿Eliminación de la pobreza o políticas de desarrollo?*, by **Mayra Espina**, CIPS, Cuba
- *La reproducción y la ampliación de la pobreza en América Latina*, by **Laura Tavares**, UERJ, Brazil

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Thirteen papers were presented in all:

- *Naturaleza o pobreza El dilema de los programas de conservación en Latinoamérica*, by **Pablo Alarcón-Cháires**, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) and **Julia Azanza**, Centro de Investigaciones Marinas, Cuba
- *Las más pobres de las pobres: Mujeres con jefatura de familia en Puerto Rico*, by **Nilsa M. Burgos Ortiz**, Universidad de Puerto Rico
- *NGOs and poverty reduction in Venezuela and post-communist Yugoslavia: Comparative perspectives*, by **Constantine Danopoulos**, **Ronald** and **Kathleen Sylvie**, San Jose State University, USA
- *Microfinance and the third world development: A supply-side analysis*, by **Khandakar Qudrat-Elahi**, Canada
- *Explorando nuevas estrategias para reducir la pobreza en el actual contexto internacional. Experiencias de Cuba*, by **Angela Ferriol**, Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas, Cuba.
- *Defining and targeting the poor in Jamaica*, by **Aldrie Henry-Lee**, University of the West Indies, Jamaica
- *Marginalidad y marginales como sujetos u objetos de la lucha contra la pobreza*, by **Elio Fidel López**, Centro de Estudios sobre América, Cuba
- *Pobreza, actores externos y actores locales: Contraste de experiencias municipales en Guatemala y el Caribe*, by **Edgar Mendoza**, FLACSO, Guatemala
- *Microfinance and the third sector in poverty alleviation strategies in French West Indies*, by **Justin Nouind**, Cameroon
- *Re-engineering poverty reduction in Jamaica: What has been the role of partnerships?*, by **Philip Osei**, University of the West Indies, Jamaica
- *Mujeres de área urbana y rural en zonas de alta marginación socioeconómica. ¿Mismas necesidades de salud?*, by **Héctor Javier Sánchez-Pérez**, El Colegio de la Frontera Sur, Mexico
- *La pobreza vista en tres escalas*, by **Aurelio Alonso Tejada**, CIPS, Cuba
- *Situación de la pobreza en el Caribe: Actualidad y perspectivas. Cuba en el contexto Caribeño*, by **María del Carmen Zabala Argüelles**, FLACSO/Universidad de La Habana, Cuba

editorial

Presentation of Best Practices in Poverty Reduction - An Analytical Framework

The notion of "best practices" is one of those concepts that has been born in the political and administrative world of anti-poverty strategies. From there it has been transported into a world of research that stands unprepared to handle it because few analytical tools are available. The researchers are faced with a choice either to ignore it or to try to give it a content that will make it more useful.

Those responsible for anti-poverty interventions want to learn from successful experiments elsewhere that can be transplanted into their own national or cultural setting. This is a sensible approach, and with increasing globalisation it is a learning approach, which will gain impetus in the years to come. However, it is also a risky approach because the cultural variation as well as the variation in the target groups is likely to disturb a direct transfer of one successful programme into a similarly successful programme in a different culture.

This book is an invitation to explore the use of best practices for more efficient poverty reduction. It is also a tool to help develop a more systematic approach to the understanding of whether a certain practice deserves to be put to further use as a best practice. In other words, an attempt to develop a methodology around the understanding and transfer of a best practice.

Best practices are presented in different ways in the literature. Most often they are reported as "success stories", without specifying the criteria by which they are judged successful. Sometimes we are introduced to best practices as "learning experiences", something that is worthy of being used in another setting. At times best practices are presented as a technical challenge where all good practices can be assembled in a database and offered to interested parties. While a database can give impetus to new ideas, it can also be deceiving if it ignores the social forces surrounding a practice.

One part of the book demonstrates how best practices are deeply embedded in the social setting in which they have been born and how their success depends on the political and moral climate of a certain culture. The challenge is to identify those specific circumstances that will make a best practice sustainable and transferable to another setting.

Other parts of the book offer concrete advice on how to proceed to discover and evaluate best practices and how to avoid some of the most obvious pitfalls when a practice is hailed best and transferred into another setting. Two chapters show how to identify a best practice among maybe as many as hundreds of ongoing practices. Another chapter suggests ways to analyse

CROP and the *Social Science Academy of Nigeria* convene the workshop:

LAW AND POVERTY V

Abuja, Nigeria, November 2003

CROP continues its project on *Law and Poverty* with a fifth workshop in Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be at the bottom of the poverty-ladder on virtually all the applicable indices for deep and rising poverty in the midst of plenty. The apparent ineffectiveness of the shifting approaches to attacking poverty in the past craves for a more holistic approach that combines the economic with the political and the social. It entails the instrumentality of law, examination of pertinent existing legislation and fashioning of new legislation in line with new strategies for poverty reduction. The role of law including (international) human rights law, is the crux of the proposed workshop.

We invite paper proposals that focus on the following subjects. Comparative approaches involving one or more country studies will be favoured:

- Role of law in adjusting/restructuring unequal economic, political and social systems: A historical perspective.
- African country experiences in the use of law for poverty reduction: Patterns, problems and prospects.
- Forms of poverty and susceptibility to intervention by the law.
- Strategizing with law to create, promote and enhance economic opportunities for poor people in Africa.
- Employing law to facilitate political empowerment for the poor in Africa.
- Using law to enhance the provision of effective social security and safety nets for poor people in Africa.
- Strategies for mobilizing African populations in favour of poverty-reduction legislations.
- Examination of terms and obligations contained in relevant international and regional agreements, conventions and protocols in relation to desirable anti-poverty legislation in Africa.
- The role of the UN human rights machinery (High Commissioner, Covenants, Rapporteurs, Special Programmes) as to poverty reduction in Africa
- The role of the African human rights machinery (Commission, Court, Special Programmes) as to poverty reduction in Africa
- The role of multinational enterprises as 'perpetrators' of human rights related poverty reduction rules in Africa.

The workshop will be limited to 30 participants. Preference will be given to scholars from Sub-Saharan Africa, but scholars from other areas are also invited. All participants will be expected to take part in the proceedings (in English), 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 according to geography (researchers from Sub-Saharan Africa 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 abstract is accepted for the workshop. As a rule, accommodation will be covered for all participants during the workshop.

THE DEADLINE FOR ABSTRACTS IS APRIL 30th 2003

The abstract should include: the title of the proposed paper and a summary of the main theme or argument. The summary should indicate theory, methods and findings of your proposed paper, and should not exceed ONE PAGE (A4). IMPORTANT: A brief CV along with 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 (preferably by E-mail) to the address below.

Abstract-givers will be notified by June 1st, 2003 whether their proposed paper 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 September 1st, 2003).

A background paper and more information about the workshop is available by contacting: CROP Executive Officer (Mr.) **Inge Tesdal**, CROP Secretariat, Fosswinkelsgate 7, N-5007 Bergen, Norway, **Tel:** +47-5558-9744, **Fax:** +47-5558-9745, **E-mail:** crop@uib.no

practices and their impacts and discusses reducing strategies. The final chapter offers the value of best practices in poverty the results of a search through different reduction as compared to other poverty (continues on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

databases of best practices.

The book forms the first attempt to pull the concept of best practices out of its politicised and applied atmosphere and treat it as a scientific tool that will add to the toolbox needed for an improved comprehension of the many failures in poverty reduction.

The book is published by Zed Books in the "CROP International Studies in Poverty Research" series. See the enclosed leaflet for information on how to order it.

ZED BOOKS - 25 YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING

Zed Books, London, a publisher especially renowned for its commitment to publish books about crucial Third World issues and extensive distribution of its publications, is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

In its 25 years Zed has published some 1,000 titles on important themes such as poverty, global issues, development and environment, gender, politics and political economy, human rights, war and conflict, cultural studies. Since 1998 Zed has published four of the CROP books on poverty issues, and through the use of its distribution system made it possible for poverty research results to be disseminated widely in countries where few institutions or individuals would normally have the means to purchase such publications. Three of these books may be ordered through the flyer inserted in this newsletter.

It is with deep respect for its ideals and achievements that CROP extends its congratulations to Zed Books on the occasion of its anniversary.

TRAINING COURSE FOR SIDA

CROP has won a tender for a pilot training course on poverty reduction for staff of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

The course package consists of research based lectures, thematic discussions, a course manual, and the establishment of a network for lecturers and course participants for further contact and collaboration. The course will contribute to further development of Sida's strategies for poverty reduction in the South. The lectures and discussions will cover research methods, introduction to various poverty research concepts, analyses of strategies to reduce poverty, and ethical considerations of participation in poverty reducing activities. Prominent researchers from the CROP network will take part as lecturers. The course will be held in Bergen, Norway, in January.

LIST OF CROP EVENTS 2002-2003

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.

June 2003

14-15: *Poverty and Social Deprivation in the Mediterranean Area*. A joint CROP and Department of Social Administration of Democritus University of Thrace workshop in Komotini, Greece. By invitation only.

November 2003

Law and Poverty V. A joint CROP and the Social Science Academy of Nigeria workshop in Abuja, Nigeria. See page 3 in this newsletter for details.

OPEN POSITIONS IN NEW UNDP POVERTY CENTRE

UNDP is seeking highly qualified candidates for the position of Director and Policy Advisors for the newly opened International Centre for Poverty Reduction, based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Rio Centre has a mandate to serve UNDP offices and partners around the world by facilitating policy analysis, capacity development, technical cooperation, and networking on social and macroeconomic policy issues, poverty measurement, employment and social protection. Researchers and experts from developing countries are strongly encouraged to apply. For more information, go to <http://www.undp.org/jobs> on Internet.

NEW BOOKS ON POVERTY

Urban livelihoods: A people centered approach to reducing poverty, edited by Carole Rakodi with Tony Lloyd-Jones, has been published by Earthscan publications.

For ordering information contact Earthscan Publications Ltd, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN, UK, Fax: +44 (0)207278 1142, E-mail: weborders@earthscan.co.uk, Internet: <http://www.earthscan.co.uk>

World Poverty: New policies to defeat an old enemy, edited by Peter Townsend and David Gordon, have been published by Policy Press.

For ordering information contact: Marston Book Services, PO Box 269, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4YN, UK, fax: +44-1235-465556, E-mail: direct.orders@marston.co.uk

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 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

SEASONS GREETINGS



We wish all our contributors,
 supporters and friends
 a peaceful and happy
 New Year 2003