

CROP newsletter

Comparative Research Programme On Poverty

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Poverty and Human Rights, a Challenge

James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, said recently,

«I believe that today [poverty] is not central on the global agenda. I believe that today lip service is given to the question of poverty. There are safe statements made by just about everybody about the issue of the Millennium Goals and about poverty. But the real issues today that seem to be on the mind of the world, terrorism, Iraq, Afghanistan, strains in the Trans-Atlantic Alliance, budget deficits, parochial problems, the visible problems that must be dealt with that are immediate, while attention is given less to the equally inevitable and the equally dangerous problems that come with poverty.

And so I think all of us have to go out of here with a certain missionary zeal to try and remind people that poverty and the environment in which we live are the real challenges for peace and that we need to give them priority.»¹

This is also the experience of many people involved with poverty issues. Politicians, members of the establishment, bureaucrats and others agree in words and only in words, that the situation is scandalous. Few poverty reducing measures are taken internationally and nationally, and they are not very efficient. Figures show the situation is growing worse. Except for promising figures for China and India (that are interesting and different,

although not easy to analyze) the situation on poverty in the world is outright dangerous.

The case of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) is particularly alarming. The latest UNCTAD report on the LDCs states that the incidence of extreme poverty has not declined during the 1990's. It stresses that «if these trends persist, it may be estimated that the number of people living in extreme poverty in the LDCs will increase from 334 million people in 2000 to 471 million in 2015.»² The LDCs are more vulnerable to civil conflict than other developing countries and remind us once more of the close link between poverty and conflict. According to the latest figures by CEPAL, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the number of people living in poverty in Latin America has increased with 11 million during the last 3 years. Poverty is a gross, massive and permanent violation of human life. Nelson Mandela has said that poverty is the modern version of slavery. And he is right.

On this background the perspective on human rights and poverty is fundamental. Abolition or eradication of poverty is not a matter of charity and good faith. We need to establish an international arena as well as national arenas to respond through united efforts. The link between human rights and poverty provides a new framework for the fight against this form of violation in a global world. The human rights perspective establishes the obligations of the states to change the perspective of poverty reduction from a charitable and humanitarian framework

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into a political and internationally legal context. Within this perspective nations, governments and international institutions have to adhere to international rules, norms, and jurisdiction. The human rights perspective transforms the issue of poverty from external consequences of economic measures to an internal responsibility that needs to take into account also decisions in the sphere of finance, economics and trade.

We are very far from this target. To move ahead we shall need to transform the mentality of policymakers and others with an impact on poverty formation. They need to understand that they and their institutions also have obligations, and they need to consider the impact and implications their decisions have on poverty and the violation of human rights. Research-wise we are not prepared to meet this challenge. We have neither the analytical tools, nor the methodology.

We need efforts also on the moral front when this position is presented to formal and informal organizations and people in place to have an impact. We need to make it understood that poverty is an unacceptable condition for human beings and that it is not a natural situation for people to live in. We need to make visible illegitimate causes of poverty such as corruption of leaders, bad governance by bureaucrats and damaging decisions made outside the world of the poor. We need to establish the fact that poverty is contrary to human rights, in the same way that torture is. Perpetrators in the room of torture are no different from perpetrators in luxurious rooms, far removed from where poverty is experienced.

We need to fight for strong international instruments with binding obligations for states and international institutions so as to protect and promote human rights in every possible poverty situation. We are only at the beginning of a long road. But the issue of poverty is extremely dangerous for the current world peace. We need to put the facts on the table so leaders all over realize that it is urgent to implement the principles laid down in the human rights convention. Massive poverty must be combated if a more peaceful world is to be obtained.

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ANNOUNCEMENT (1)

UNESCO SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME ON POVERTY ERADICATION

Building national capacities for research and policy analysis

UNESCO has recently launched a small research grants programme aimed at strengthening national capacities for research and policy analysis on poverty eradication. The overall goal of the programme is to encourage research professionals and their institutions to contribute to poverty eradication strategies and national action plans that are based on a human rights framework. It is part of the strategy of the UNESCO Sector of Social and Human Sciences (under development) focusing on poverty, especially extreme poverty, as a violation of human rights. An international consultation on the proposed strategy, jointly organized by UNESCO and CROP, was held in Bergen, Norway, on 5-6 June 2003 (see *Editorial, CROP Newsletter*, Vol. 10, no. 3, Sept. 2003).

The UNESCO Small Grants Programme will provide individual project grants in the amount of \$10,000 (upper ceiling) to institutionally-based mid-career professionals at universities, specialized research centres, relevant Government departments, NGOs, etc., in targeted regions of the world – selected on a competitive basis. The Programme targets researchers in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and parts of Latin America and the Caribbean – that is, the regions or sub-regions of the world least likely to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015, according to prevailing trends.

UNESCO specifically wishes to encourage research and policy analysis focusing on the relationship between poverty and human rights. The Organization also wishes to promote analysis on the impact of public policies on the rights of the poor, especially on the extent to which «pro-poor» policies and related national actions in development programming are actually contributing to improved livelihoods and participation of the poor. In cooperation with partners, including CROP, UNESCO hopes to support work that moves toward a view of poverty as a human rights violation. In so doing the Organization hopes to contribute to a heightened awareness of the injustice of poverty, in accordance with the U.N. Committee on Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights which describes it as "a human condition characterized by the sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights."

The UNESCO funding under this initiative is intended to cover the direct costs of the research, including the local travel and subsistence of the principal researcher(s) and research assistants, acquisition of relevant literature and supplies, data collection, analysis, and report preparation. The grant will not cover the salaries of the principal researcher(s) or international travel. Three grants will be earmarked for state of the art reviews of the literature on poverty and human rights (one in each of the three targeted regions), to be allocated on a competitive basis to qualifying members of the CROP network.

The deadline for submission of applications is 31 October 2004.

More information on this opportunity is available at the UNESCO Web site: http://www.unesco.org/shs/poverty_grants

John Nkinyangi (Team Leader)

Notes

- 1) Scaling Up Poverty Reduction: A Global Learning Process, and Conference in Shanghai, May 25-27, 2004: <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/reducingpoverty>
- 2) UNCTAD, Report on the Least Developed Countries, Trade and Poverty, 2004.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2004

The UNDP Human Development Report 2004 *Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World* can be downloaded for free from the UNDP webpage: <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004/>

editorial

Pierre Sané

Assistant Director-General

Social and Human Sciences Sector, UNESCO

POVERTY, THE NEXT FRONTIER IN THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Poverty will only cease when it is recognized as a violation of human rights and, as such, abolished.

One should be aware that the striking feature of our civilization, as it globalises around the aspiration to unprecedented prosperity, is the persistence and even increase of poverty. It is an overwhelming fact: poverty affects half the world's population. It is spreading: the vast majority of the 2 to 3 thousand million human beings who will be added to the world's population before the end of the century will be exposed to it. It is putting alarming pressure on the environment and global equilibria. The figures are apocalyptic: 8 million children die each year because of poverty, 150 million children under the age of five suffer from extreme malnutrition, 100 million children live in the streets. Every three seconds, poverty kills a child somewhere. And our world puts up with it.

When, in 1994, 800.000 corpses of Tutsi and opposition Hutu victims of genocide in Rwanda were carried on rivers of blood through the country of a thousand hills, the world held its breath. We all felt guilty. We wished that action had been taken to prevent it. We all said, once again, «never again!». The United Nations established an International Tribunal to establish the truth and hand down justice. «We cannot bring back the dead, but the guilty shall pay. International law will prevail. Morality is safe». But what about the 8 million children who die each year from poverty-related diseases? We are well aware of these figures and they are probably under-estimated. We will not be taken by surprise again and, furthermore, we could prevent the slaughter with means that, in the final analysis, are fairly limited.

What, then, is the basis of the ethical double standard that leads us to accept the poverty manufactured by our society, even though it kills more surely and methodically than machetes and militias? Is there a single moral or ethical justification for this central contradiction between the equality proclaimed in the granting of rights and growing inequality in access to life-giving resources?

Whatever it might be, the existing «standards of decency» are changing. The international community has set, as a priority for the millennium (Millennium Development Goals [MDGs]),

ANNOUNCEMENT (2)

UNESCO AND CROP SMALL GRANTS:

State of the art reviews of the literature on poverty and human rights

As part of the UNESCO «Small Grants Programme on Poverty Eradication: Building national capacities for research and policy analysis», three grants will be earmarked for state of the art reviews of the literature on poverty and human rights (one in each of the three targeted regions or sub-regions of the world - sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and parts of Latin America and the Caribbean), to be allocated on a competitive basis to qualifying members of the CROP network. (For more information, see related article in this issue; refer also to the announcement on this initiative at the UNESCO Web site http://www.unesco.org/shs/poverty_grants), where pertinent details are provided on application, approval process, notification).

Each of the three grants earmarked to members of the CROP network for the state of the art reviews of the literature on poverty and human rights is in the amount of \$10,000 (upper ceiling). The UNESCO funding is intended to cover the direct costs of the research, including the local travel and subsistence of the principal researcher(s) and research assistants, acquisition of relevant literature and supplies, data collection, analysis, and report preparation. The grant will not cover the salaries of the principal researcher(s) or international travel.

A complete application will comprise a detailed curriculum vitae of the applicant (and of each team member when it is a joint effort), as well as a detailed research proposal (up to 20 standard pages) providing background and rationale and scientific and policy justification of the issues to be examined in the state of the art review of the literature on poverty and human rights, with a particular focus on the designated region. To be successful, a project proposal will need to demonstrate the contribution the activity will make, over and above previous efforts.

Eligible Members of the CROP network are invited to submit their applications to the designated UNESCO Field Office (see information in the announcement). To facilitate follow up, copies of applications should also be sent electronically to the CROP Secretariat at the University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway (at the e-mail address: crop@uib.no) and to UNESCO Headquarters in Paris (at the e-mail address: shs-povertysmallgrants@unesco.org).

The deadline for submission of applications is 31 October 2004.

John Nkinyangi (Team Leader) (UNESCO)

Prof. Else Øyen (CROP Secretariat)

to reduce by half in 15 years the number of people living in extreme poverty.

The challenge is huge and the task is urgent. Nearly 3 billion people receive only about 1.2% of world income, while 1 billion people in the rich countries receive 80%. An annual income transfer of 1% from one group to the other would suffice to eliminate extreme poverty. However, the transfer continues to operate in the opposite direction, despite efforts towards debt reduction and development aid.

No great programme will ensure the eradication of poverty. Its proclaimed abolition must, first, create rights and obligations, and thereby mobilize the true forces that can correct the state of a world plagued by poverty. By simply setting an effective and binding priority, abolition changes the ground rules and contributes

to the creation of a new world. Such is the price to pay to give globalisation a human face; such is also the greatest opportunity for sustainable development that we can hope to grasp.

Ultimately, the issue is to mobilize public opinion for a universal justice that is within our grasp. Its emergence has been lengthy - very lengthy. From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the Rome Conference that established the International Criminal Court, the emergence of universal justice has been defiled by acts of barbarity that have grossly infringed human dignity. Now, however, the legal instruments are there, and step by step, experiments and initiatives give hope. It remains now to energize political will by unceasing mobilization, true thinking, the contributions of experts and support for victims and their families.

NEW POVERTY RESEARCH PROJECTS IN CROP DATABASE

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

Africa:

- Poverty eradication in the West-African sub region
- Environmental problems of road tanker distribution of petroleum products in Nigeria (Case of Lagos Metropolis)
- Improving productive capacity of rural women in Cameroon
- From the debit of the countries to the credit of the people - The relationship between external debt, development aid and poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Third sector intervention and the challenge for social development: Poverty alleviation in Mauritius
- Gender and women's knowledge among the Chagga of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania
- Ghana prostate health study

Asia:

- Role of the state in theories of development [India]
- Elite's perception of poverty in Pakistan
- Water and poverty [in dry land areas of Pakistan]

Latin and Central America:

- Clientelism and democracy in Brazil
- Human development and measurement problems [in Southern Brazil]
- Income redistribution: Theories, policies and measures [in Brazil]
- Land reform and poverty reduction in North-East Brazil

Europe:

- Education and exclusion in Central-Eastern Europe
- Public-Private Partnerships in the UK

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

CROP ANNUAL REPORT 2003

The CROP Annual Report 2003 was published earlier this year, it contains in depth description of CROPs scientific activities last year: Research projects; workshops, publications, and networking.

The report can be accessed and downloaded from the CROP webpage at <http://www.crop.org/publications/annual.htm>.

LIST OF CROP EVENTS 2004-2005

September/October 2004

30.09-01.10: *Education, Knowledge and Development*. The annual conference of the Norwegian Association for Development Research (NFU), which CROP is co-organising, will be held in Bergen, Norway.

October 2004

18-19: *Poverty, Next Frontier in the Human Rights Struggle*. Seminar co-organized with UNESCO, in Paris, France, in connection with the "International Day for the Eradication of Poverty."

November 2004

22-26: *Poverty as a Challenge to Citizenship and Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Workshop under the CLACSO/CROP programme, together with Universidad Centro-Americana, Nicaragua, and Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), Costa Rica.

January 2005

26-28: *Law and Poverty VI*. Workshop co-organized with Centre for International and Comparative Labour and Social Security Law (CICLASS), in Johannesburg, South Africa.

CROP SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE 2005-2006

The General Assembly of the International Social Science Council (ISSC) appoints the CROP Scientific Committee to advise the Programme. The Scientific Committee for 2005-2006 will be appointed by the XXVth ISSC General Assembly that will be held in Beijing, China, November 14-21, 2004.

The members of the Scientific Committee are elected among outstanding poverty researchers world-wide, and chosen to represent different geographical regions and scientific disciplines. A fair representation of women is being sought. The role of the Scientific Committee is to give guidance to the development of CROP, to serve on the Programme Committees for different activities and to act as advocate for CROP in contact with the international poverty research community, organisations, financing agencies and mass media.

If you have suggestions for candidates for the new Scientific Committee, please send them to the CROP Secretariat (E-mail: crop@uib.no) before September 30th.

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 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 site holds 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
Inge Erling Tesdal, Executive Officer
Hege Aarethun, Executive Officer

POVERTY IN THE U.S.

Prof. Mark R. Rank has written *One Nation, Underprivileged* about poverty in the United States.

Despite its wealth, the United States leads the industrialized world in poverty. The book examines this paradox and discusses a new framework for addressing the social and economic problems.

For more information, contact Oxford University Press: <http://www.oup.com>