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Mobilizing critical research for preventing and eradicating poverty

CROP Secretariat

P.O. Box 7800
N - 5020 Bergen - NORWAY
Visiting address: Jekteviksbakken 31
Phone: +47 555-89744 / -89703
eMail: crop@uib.no
Website: www.crop.org

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EDITORIAL

This newsletter is a way of sharing with CROPNet, colleagues and friends from all over the world what we have been doing during the last semester of 2011 and to give you all a glimpse of what we are planning for the first part of the approaching year.

The focus during this period has been on health, water and universal social policies. The relevance of these topics for those who live in poverty is so obvious that the focus needs no further justification. It is quite evident that scientific research should be oriented toward finding alternative paths for improving the lives of billions of human beings. That is why all these topics have been on our agenda for the second semester of 2011 and will remain there in some way or another for the near future, both in their own right and as part of a broader discussion of the MDGs and the future of international co-operation toward poverty eradication.

We will follow up on these themes through publications that are the result of our activities and of strategic partnership with like-minded institutions, such as [ASAP](#), [CODESRIA](#), [CLACSO](#), [SEPHIS](#), [Nile Basin Research Programme](#) and their respective networks.

During the last semester CROP has also been part of an initiative to link different research units at

the University of Bergen – a leading institution in the field of international health – in order to create a consortium aimed at improving our knowledge about the complex relationships between health and poverty. We found tremendous support and collaborative efforts from the *Department of Health Promotion and Development* and the *Center for International Health* (CIH) that allowed us to discuss ideas and research plans for the future, as well as broaden the discussion by including scholars from the *Christian Michelsen Institute* (CMI), the *Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research* (NBIR), *Yale University* and the *International Social Science Council* (ISSC).

Of course, there is a strong desire and very specific plan to involve research institutions from the South in these and other academic initiatives. CROP is currently negotiating with CODESRIA a long term cooperation agreement and will continue to work closely with CLACSO and SEPHIS. We will therefore continue promoting the international debate with a strong South-South focus through the participation of scholars from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. We will also remain committed to the quest for gender and geographical balance in our activities. The impact of CROP activities in LAC during the past decade has resulted in a

relatively more active participation of Latin American scholars than others in our international workshop events organized in New Delhi, Kampala, and Mexico City. In these workshops (see notes below) 29 papers from LAC, 10 from Africa, 4 from Asia and one from another region were accepted. We expect to have a more balanced geographical participation once we consciously encourage participation from Asia and Africa. On the other hand, there has been a “perfect” equilibrium between male (22) and female (22) participation in these three workshops.

A lot remains to be done in the near future. The commitment of the SC and the Secretariat is to continue with our modest contribution to the mobilization of critical research for poverty eradication and prevention. We expect to do it with your support.

We wish all of you the best in 2012!



Thomas Pogge
Chair of the Scientific
Committee



Alberto Cimadamore
Director

CROP PRIZE 2012

CROP, in cooperation with Zed Books, will shortly launch the *CROP International Studies in Poverty Prize 2012*.

The call for manuscripts seeks original, high-quality, alternative and critical academic manuscripts. Especially welcomed are works providing sound contributions to the eradication and/or prevention of global poverty while challenging the dominant thinking and knowledge.

Contributions from all disciplines of the Social Sciences and Humanities will be welcome. Multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches will be considered with particular interest, as will comparative perspectives. Participation of academics from all over the world is expected and submissions from the South are encouraged.

The winner of the *CROP International Studies in Poverty Prize 2012* will receive NOK 30.000. The manuscript will be published in the CROP International Studies in Poverty series by way of Zed Books. Two runner-ups will be awarded with honorable mentions and prizes of NOK 5.000.

The call will be launched during the first week of March 2012. Please visit our website (www.crop.org) to read details and conditions.

WORKSHOP ON POVERTY, HEALTH AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS



In October 2011 CROP held a workshop in India on the topic “Protecting the health of the poor: social movements in the South”. This event was organized with Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP) and the University of Delhi.

The workshop in New Delhi gathered participants from Asia, Latin America, Africa and Europe, all presenting papers on a variety of perspectives on poverty and health (see the [Workshop Programme](#)). Scholars and representatives of social movements engaged in discussions during the workshop and other related events about feasible ways to promote health in the South. Towards this end, inspirational health initiatives in Indian slum areas were shared by representatives from the NGOs SWAASTHYA and HRIDAY. An example was presented from innovative and successful cross-border organisation of community health care services in hard to reach areas of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. From such locally-focussed approaches there is a large span to the health effect of international agreements and health actions, an effect that was skilfully presented in papers from other participants. In several presentations from Colombia examples were shared of litigation processes to enforce the right to health care and medication. Human rights perspectives to health were highlighted throughout the workshop, particularly in works from Ghana and Mexico. Several presentations voiced how this right is violated by agreements of intellectual property rights that prevent access by the poor to affordable medications for life threatening diseases. The [Health Impact Fund](#) was presented as one innovative approach to improving access by the poor to life-saving medicines.

A main outcome of this workshop is the understanding that to ensure the right to health of the poor, urgent action is needed at multiple levels. Health should be *promoted* through ensuring the prerequisites for health, including nutrition, shelter and income. *Illness prevention* can be strengthened through health education and health care services, and when illness is present quality treatment should be available in a way that is accessible as well as locally acceptable. At all stages, from promotion and prevention to *treatment*, action is needed from international and national policy levels right down to local social action at the grassroots level.

Parallel to the workshop was the Indian launch of Academic Stand Against Poverty (ASAP), an event that followed previous launch events in Europe (see note below).

CROP extends heartfelt thanks to all participants and co-organizers who made this workshop an enriching experience!

LIFE SAVING MEDICINES FOR THE POOR – INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

Poverty, social justice and global health: How can the Health Impact Fund (HIF) make a difference? This question was the focus of attention in a public meeting in Bergen. The event was co-organized by CROP, Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM) and the Student Welfare Organisation in Bergen (SiB).

Prof. Thomas Pogge, CROP Scientific Committee Chair and a world leading specialist on the nexus of poverty, social justice and global health, was the main speaker at a public conference in Bergen on Aug 30th 2011. The event was a unique opportunity for a wide audience to understand the dimension of the problem under discussion as well as to envisage a possible solution for one of the most urgent health problems affecting the poor: lack of access to lifesaving medication. One answer could be the *Health Impact Fund* (HIF). Through innovative incentives the HIF seeks to stimulate innovators to focus on the development of new high-impact medicines against diseases that are now

neglected, keeping availability high and prices to the lowest feasible cost of production. HIF rewards would also motivate innovators to ensure that their products are competently prescribed and optimally used.

The event included a debate with Norwegian academics Prof. Ole Frithjof Norheim and researcher Christine Årdal who critically approached the HIF initiative and engaged in the public debate with Pogge and the audience. The lively Q&A session engaged the audience, with well over 100 persons in attendance filling all seats of the venue *Det Akademiske Kvarter*.

PARTNERSHIPS TOWARDS POVERTY ERADICATION

CROP has expressed a firm conviction on and commitment to the need for strengthening links among academic experts and civil society actors. The CROP support to the *Academic Stand Against Poverty* (ASAP)-Norway launch in Oslo was a good opportunity to reaffirm this engagement.

The Norwegian chapter of ASAP was launched during an intensive two days workshop held on September 3rd and 4th at the University of Oslo. The workshop was co-organized by CROP and devoted to exploring the potential of the ASAP organization for helping academics to have a more direct, significant, and visible impact on global poverty eradication.

Social scientists from different disciplines and areas of knowledge shared their views and experiences on poverty research and activism. Several areas for priority work were identified as were specific initiatives to be further discussed and developed. Health was among the identified areas, and specialists from diverse disciplines explained their line of work and results. The Health Impact Fund (HIF) and other initiatives were presented as examples of how academics can contribute to alleviating poverty-related health problems by helping the global poor gain better access to advanced health care.

ASAP's members presented their *Global Poverty Consensus Report* (GPCR) project and invited the audience to work in disciplinary and multidisciplinary groups to identify theses and shared conclusions about ways to reduce poverty around the world. Two sets of breakout sessions were held. The first involved dialogue amongst members of the same disciplines and areas of knowledge (Economics, Environment, Health, Philosophy and Political Science), and the second set of sessions was cross-disciplinary activity aiming at building bridges to connect specialized findings with the complexity of multi- and transdisciplinary approaches to the reality of poverty. A number of good ideas, as well as constructive critical feedback, were generated for the GPCR project. Those inputs will be processed by ASAP, an institution that will continue this project through 2012 and beyond.

The GPCR project, for which Oslo served as a 'twin launch' with the New Delhi meeting, will therefore increase its effort to identify consensus on core aspects of poverty alleviation, toward contributions to global public debate about what will come after the 2015 target date of the Millennium Development Goals.

A final public event was organized at the *Litteraturhuset* in Oslo to present main conclusions of previous work and to promote an open dialogue with the audience. The debate was initiated with presentations by Mads Gilbert (University of Tromsø, Norway), Godelieve Van Heteren (Erasmus University, Rotterdam and former Dutch MP), Ashok Acharya (University of Delhi, India), Thomas Pogge (Yale University, ASAP, and CROP) and Alberto Cimadamore, (CROP / University of Bergen). They all shared their insights and public engagement in this closing event, jointly organized by CROP, ASAP, and the Center for the Study of Mind in Nature (CSMN) of the University of Oslo, and sparked a lively debate with members of the audience, which included Noam Chomsky.

CROP SPONSORED PANEL AT THE ISA CONFERENCE

How, and in which ways, has the global economic crisis affected the prescriptions for national social policy articulated by international organizations? What is the significance of emerging global actors such as the BRIC countries*? How might they influence the global discourse about desirable anti-poverty policies? These interrelated themes were the starting points for panel discussions at Conference of the International Sociological Association's Research Committee on Poverty and Social Welfare (RC19).

* Brazil, Russia, India and China.

The panel was organized by Bob Deacon (University of Sheffield, UK, and Member of CROP's Scientific Committee) and Alexandra Kaasch (Universität Bremen). The session began with the contribution by Kaasch who compared the global social policy prescriptions at different times of global economic crisis. Second, Stephen McBride and Jessica Merolli focused on the post-crisis social policy advice from global institutions. Then, Marian Urbina and Rebecca Surender

discussed on social policy transfers in the context of new global actors, and especially on China's "model" of aid in Africa. Discussion revolved around China's role in international development with divergent views being expressed. One of these views suggested that China was breaking away from a failing tradition of international effort focused only on the poor towards a new approach focused on state-led development with potential cross class alliances.

The final contribution to the panel was from Gabriele Köhler who presented an approach to policy innovations for human development. She described shifts in global governance and the emergence of new economic powerhouses which influence global policy decisions and have been introducing socioeconomic policy innovations, notably in social protection. South Asia was presented as one centre of such policy innovations. (See the last *CROP Brief* on this topic).

WORKSHOP ON "POVERTY AND UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION" IN MEXICO

Latin America is going through times of social, politic and economic changes. During the first decade of the 21st century, Centre-left parties or coalitions have been in government in different countries of the region. In this context, workshop participants addressed the relationship between poverty reduction, universal social protection and welfare regimes, examining what had changed regarding social protection. One of the conclusions was that there is evidence showing that some of the best results registered in the last decades have been achieved by public transfers and universal social services.

The workshop "Poverty and universal social protection: Latin American experiences and comparatives perspectives" took place in Mexico City in December 7th – 9th, 2011.

The event was organized by the CLACSO-CROP Programme on Poverty Studies along with the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

During the workshop 18 papers from 10 Latin American countries were presented and achievements, goals and challenges of social policies and universal protection measures were critically addressed. Recent

evolution of universal policies and selective programs like Conditional Cash Transfers (CTTs) were analysed as well as the effects of Neoliberal policies on the capability of the State to respond to poverty in the most unequal region of the world. CCTs were a particular focus, with contrasting results being reported. It became clear that in-depth studies will be needed to obtain a clear assessment of a program that reaches 19% of the regional population, or a total of 115 million of persons in 18 countries, many of whom were out of the reach of previous social interventions. The

question that still remains is to what extent these segmented policies help to achieve consistent progress toward an institutionalized universalism. A scientifically based response to this question is crucial in a region where the long term fight against poverty has shown its weakness: in 1980 the number of poor people was 136 million. Today, that number is close to 183 million (CEPAL, data from 2009). The book that will be published as a result of this event in the CLACSO-CROP Series will try to offer some answers in that direction.

WORKSHOP ON “POVERTY, WATER AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT” IN UGANDA



This cross-continental and interdisciplinary seminar was jointly organized by the CLACSO-CROP Programme, Makerere University, The Nile Basin Research Programme (NBRP) and The Nordic Africa Institute (NAI), in Kampala, Uganda in November 2011.

Over the last decades, the multilateral institutions and the development agencies have promoted and strengthened a particular view of the relationships between poverty, water, and development. In this conventional perspective, the fight against poverty is assumed to be a task that is essentially fulfilled by just providing water to the poor in order to meet their needs for nutrition, cleaning and sanitation. In the 21st century it has become clear, however, that such an approach does not prevent the production and reproduction of poverty through generations as was stated in many presentations during the workshop.

Scholars from Africa and Latin America engaged in a fruitful exchange of views where common interests contrasted with different approaches and realities surrounding water

allocation practices which were in general viewed as inequitable, inefficient, and unsustainable. The right to water emerged as an issue conditioned by quite different political and geographical situations on the two continents.

It was affirmed that since water is increasingly perceived as a scarce natural asset, “More Value per Drop” has become the new credo for achieving the same old goals. As a result, water governance institutions were seen as tacitly discriminating against poor households and economies. In order to create a socially equitable and sustainable development, the orthodox view of the water-poverty-development nexus was consistently questioned by participants who are critically questioning the *status quo* and seeking to accelerate the pace towards a

paradigmatic change in the study of the multiple links among poverty, water, and development.

Seventeen academics from Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Mauritius, Morocco, Tanzania and Uganda) and Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru) were selected from 40 abstracts submitted. The results of these discussions and presentations will be edited by David Barkin (Autonomous Metropolitan University of Xochimilco, Mexico), Elma Montaña (National University of Cuyo, Argentina) and Edward K. Kirumira (Makerere University, Uganda) and published in the CROP International Studies in Poverty Research Series.

2011 CLACSO-CROP GRANT COMPETITION

Like every year since 2002, the CLACSO-CROP Programme has launched its annual Grants Competition on different topics related with poverty studies. This year the

theme was “Poverty, inequality and health in Latin America and the Caribbean”. Sixty-five applications were submitted, and an Academic Jury of specialists in the relevant topics was responsible for evaluating and selecting research projects.

The winners were announced at the end of November. The competition awarded three scholarships for senior researchers from Mexico, Cuba and Peru. Twelve projects from junior researchers were also rewarded (from Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, Honduras and Paraguay).

The results of the research produced by senior and junior fellows will be published in the CLACSO-CROP Series in due time after a peer review process.

2012 CLACSO-CROP CHAIR ON INEQUALITIES IN LAC SELECTED

The selection of the “CLACSO-CROP Chair on Inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)” is an initiative to promote critical thinking

in the social sciences in the region and to stimulate the development of new theoretical perspectives. The focus is on the most challenging social phenomenon in Latin America and the Caribbean: inequality and its social consequences. The deadline for submitting proposals was Oct 3rd 2011.

After thorough evaluation by an Academic Jury, Dr. Eduardo Chavez Molina from the University of Buenos Aires (Argentina) was selected to hold the position of Chair for 2012. The winning proposal is titled “Class, Inequality and Social Mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean”. Classes will be offered during 2012 in the virtual network of graduate studies supported by CLACSO.

WORKSHOP ON “POVERTY AND PEASANT PERSISTENCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD”

CROP and El Colegio de México jointly organize the interdisciplinary seminar, examining the roots of peasant’s poverty and political responses in the contemporary world. This event will take place in March 13-15 2012, in Mexico City.

It is quite widely known that most of the world’s rural inhabitants are poor. Several studies state that approximately one billion inhabitants in rural settings are living in poverty. What is more challenging is to find empirically sound explanations about why households headed by peasants or rural day laborers are poor in quite different settings and why these are historically constant

situations. What explains the persistence of a large class of small peasants? What explains their persistent poverty? Are the answer(s) to these two questions linked and, if so, how (or alternatively, why not)? What are sound policies for eradicating poverty among peasants?

Closely related to these questions and issues is the topic of food security, raised as a crucial objective from many different viewpoints, interests and perspectives. Food price volatility (and in fact, high prices) will likely continue and possibly increase, making poor farmers, consumers and countries more vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity. Therefore, the workshop will be an opportunity to explore the relation between food security and the reality of poor farmers in different geographical and social settings.

The aim of the workshop will be to examine the above-mentioned interrelated topics in order to provide explanations and answers that could trigger new lines of thought and action.

[More information](#)

CROP PANEL AT NORLARNET CONFERENCE

“Poverty politics in contemporary Latin America: comparative and critical views” was the title of a panel organized by CROP within the Norlarnet Conference 2011 held in October in Bergen, Norway. Researchers of CROPNet discussed the complex relationships between social policies, cash transfers and elite perceptions on poverty and the poor.

The meeting was chaired by Einar Braathen who presented an analysis on Brazilian policy on poverty reduction that questioned the sustainability of the model it is based on. Felipe J. Hevia then made a comparative analysis of the Brazilian and Mexican cases of implementation of Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Programs. Hevia described how Brazil has been attempting to universalize some social policies

and the specific operation of *Bolsa Familia* in the complex political, economic, and social reality of this huge country. He contrasted the Brazilian reality with the Mexican one, signaling that the hegemony of targeting practices in the latter along with the political fragility and the lack of a coordinated social policy have been reinforcing the centrality of the *Oportunidades* program in fighting poverty in Mexico.

Finally, Line N. Sundt Næsse focused on elite perceptions of poverty and how they relate to democracy in Paraguay. According to the results of her field work, the elite’s perception of demands of rights and consumption by the poor pose a huge challenge to democratic consolidation in that country. Presentations were followed by a Q&A session.

After the session, members of the panel and the CROP Secretariat considered the possibility of creating a Working Group focused on contemporary research on poverty politics and social policy. The Secretariat is collaborating with the panelists and other interested parties in the development of a work plan for the Working Group, which will be formally launched in 2012, probably in the context of a workshop on the same subject.

CALENDAR

NEXT CROP EVENTS

March 13-15

■ **“Poverty and peasant persistence”**, International Workshop in Mexico City jointly organized by CROP and El Colegio de Mexico.

April 16-20

■ **“Poverty and ethics”**, seminars and conferences in Bergen and Oslo that will have **Adolfo Perez Esquivel** and **Enrique Dussel** as keynote speakers.
■ Launch in Bergen of the CROP Working Group on **“Ethics and values for poverty eradication and alternative development models”**.

May 23-26

■ **“Basic universalism and poverty eradication in Latin America: Lights and shadows”**, Panel at the LASA Conference 2012, San Francisco.