

# **Desk Review paper for UNICEF's Conference on "Children & Poverty: Global Context, Local Solutions"**

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## **CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY**

**A review of child poverty definitions, measurements, and policies**

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**Abstract:** Is the issue of children living in poverty recognized by and incorporated into anti-poverty strategies? Who are the children living in poverty? Have governments, civil society organizations, and international organizations identified them and adopted policies to reduce child poverty? Is the situation of girls living in poverty taken into account? Are poverty reduction policies following a human rights-based approach? This paper addresses some of these and reviews different concepts regarding child poverty (e.g. different definitions of children living in poverty and efforts to measure child poverty). The paper also maps some policies and strategies to reduce child poverty. In general, the paper finds that there is a lack of consideration of children's issues in the anti-poverty strategies. However, several organizations have recently adopted a human rights-based approach to defining children living in poverty. A few governments have actually started to incorporate explicit targets and policies to reduce the number of children living in poverty.

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## INTRODUCTION

The world is falling short in its promise and commitment to ensure that every child enjoys a safe and nurturing childhood. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which came to force in 1989, provides children – in both rich and poor countries – the right to a childhood in which they can learn, play, be healthy, and develop. However, 15 years after the adoption of the Convention and after more than 15 years of market-led economic growth, governments and the international community are still far from fulfilling children's rights and creating a world fit for children.

Over half of the children in the developing world live in poverty. As the box below indicates, children are deprived of access to the most basic goods and services.

- One in six children is underweight or suffering from stunting; one in seven has no health care at all; one in five has no safe water and one in three has no toilet or sanitation facilities at home.
- Over 640 million children live in dwellings with mud floors or extreme overcrowding; and over 300 million children have no TV, radio, telephone or newspaper.
- Over 120 million children are shut out of primary schools, the majority of them girls
- More than 30,000 children die of preventable causes worldwide every day (Save the Children, 2004)

Source: unless otherwise indicated, UNICEF, 2004a.

Such level of *child deprivation* is not incorporated into the growing dialogue on anti-poverty policies or in the current debate on the exact definition of poverty. For instance, the widely accepted monetary approach to identifying and measuring poverty is being challenged by other multidisciplinary approaches; such as the human rights based

approach, the basic needs approach, and the capability approach. *However, this debate does differentiate the concept of child poverty and the different needs and vulnerabilities of children living in poverty.* Not only has child poverty been excluded from the debate, but it has also been invisible in the efforts to measure and tackle poverty. While there are other debates regarding poverty that have significant effects on children living in poverty – such as equity and poverty as well pro-poor policies – this paper focuses on issues that explicitly address child poverty.

Furthermore, there are several terms used to describe the hardships of child poverty; including Child Poverty, Childhood Poverty, and Children Living in Poverty. These expressions aim to refine the discourse on poverty and children. While it is recognized that they have different working definitions, for purpose of style, these terms are used interchangeably throughout this paper.

This paper aims to discuss some issues that deal with children living in poverty. However, since children are particularly dependent of their care takers, this paper will discuss how the situation of the mother, father, the family, and, in general, the immediate environment have direct and strong impact on children's wellbeing. The focus of this document is on child poverty but it is clear that children are not isolated actors, and policies addressed to realize children's should be related to policies oriented towards the women, families, and the community.

The paper presents data on recent endeavors to define and measure child poverty. The data shows that children are a vulnerable group, and that dealing with their deprivation is a critical priority to combat poverty today and in the future.

In this regard, the purpose of this paper is to provide an overview and discuss how organizations – academic, public, private, domestic, local, and international – are de-

fining, and measuring child poverty, and what are their proposals for addressing the special needs of children and to reduce the impact of poverty on children.

Child poverty is affecting the lives of millions of children worldwide. It is a problem present in both poor and rich countries, and needs to be acknowledged and dealt with directly. Conventional poverty reduction strategies that concentrate on generating economic growth to reduce poverty do not recognize that children experience poverty differently from adults and that children have specific and different needs. Thus, conventional poverty reduction strategies, as will be discussed below, are inadequate to addressing child poverty.

This paper is another step in the effort to highlight the significance and unique aspects of child poverty. In keeping with previous UN/UNICEF efforts such as **Poverty Reduction Begins with Children** (2000), **A World fit for children** (2002), **Child Poverty in the Developing World** (2003), and **The State of the World's Children 2005 – Childhood Under Threat** (2005), this paper focuses on the threat that poverty poses to children, the importance of recognizing that child poverty is different from adult poverty, and the need to include child poverty in the international and domestic anti-poverty dialogue. The paper is a mapping, if you will, of different approaches to define, identify, measure, and tackle child poverty. It relies on resources from a variety of organizations – public, private, domestic, local, and international – that directly work on child poverty issues.

The paper has four sections. The first section discusses why child poverty should be studied and addressed. It reviews the following topics:

- Poverty Cycle
- Difference with Adult Poverty
- Human Rights Approach
- Vulnerability
- Economic/Investment, Rate of Return
- Children in Conflict and Natural Disasters
- Child Poverty and Gender

While this is not an exhaustive list of topics, it makes a compelling case for differentiating child poverty from adult poverty, and addressing the special needs of children in poverty reduction strategies.

The second section is a summary of different definitions of child poverty and conceptual frameworks that shape child poverty action plans. The paper finds that, from the few organizations that work with a specific definition of children living in poverty, most of them define child poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon that requires direct policy intervention. The research also finds that human rights principles are important factors in shaping child poverty definitions and action plans.

The third section presents two approaches to measuring child poverty. The first is the monetary approach, which uses an income-based poverty line to identify poverty. The second approach is the deprivation approach, which establishes a set of basic services and capabilities and then measures the number of children who do not have access to the basket of services and capabilities.

The deprivation approach considers children's access to set of basic services – such as education, healthcare, water and sanitation, information, etc. The paper presents the results of two deprivation research projects. These results, like the findings from the monetary studies, find that millions of children are critically deprived of basic services and therefore lack the capabilities to escape from poverty.

The paper juxtaposes the findings of different studies that indicate that in both developed and less developed countries children make up the largest component of people living in poverty.

The fourth section of the paper presents a mapping of the different policies that explicitly address child poverty. This section begins by reviewing the relationship between the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) initiative and child poverty. In particular, the paper presents the results of several reviews of PRSPs that find that a majority of PRSPs fail to directly address

child poverty. The paper also presents some recommendations proposed by UNICEF to make PRSPs more receptive to children's special needs.

The fourth section includes a set of national initiatives and strategies that are directed at reducing child poverty. These are:

- Cashier transfers
- Elimination of user fees
- Budget initiatives for children
- Holistic Approach – which calls for countries to orchestrate public services to better address child poverty
- Macroeconomic approach – recognition that macroeconomic and fiscal policies have a great effect on children
- Focusing on children
- Advocacy and Mobilization

These initiatives and strategies represent only a few of the options that governments, civil society organizations, and donors could support to directly address child poverty.

The paper also includes two annexes. Annex I presents an overview of the debate

on the exact definition of poverty. This annex highlights the influence that the definition of poverty has over the types of policies that a poverty reduction strategy adopts. For example, the monetary approach concentrates poverty reduction strategies on income generating programs. It focuses on individuals and not on the community or on public goods. On the other hand, the capabilities approach defines poverty as a multi-dimensional phenomenon and considers a broad set of private and public variables in identifying and measuring poverty. The capabilities approach does not concentrate poverty reduction strategies on increasing an individual's income level; instead it focuses on providing individuals and the community with the needed capacities for them to live an independent and decent life.

Annex II provides some brief country case studies of specific initiatives to tackle child poverty. The paper identifies two case studies, which illustrate examples where countries have explicitly identified child poverty as a distinct challenge and have adopted specific policies and allocated significant resources to address it.

## SECTION 1 – WHY FOCUS ON CHILD POVERTY?

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The world has promised children the right to a good start in life. Child poverty is a short fall in the realization of that promise, and a violation of children’s human rights to survive and develop. States and the international community have the obligation to work toward safeguarding these rights.

Today’s children embody tomorrow’s world. Uneducated, malnourished, poor children are likely to become tomorrow’s uneducated, malnourished, poor adults (UNDP, 2004; Bradbury, Jenkins, and Micklewright, 2005). Thus, to reduce poverty tomorrow, child poverty needs to be directly addressed today. Similarly, child poverty is also a plague on society today. Reducing child poverty will alleviate the misery and deprivation in which children live in today. To that end, it is essential to study child poverty in order to develop anti-poverty strategies that deal with its root causes and alleviate its effects on children. Children simply experience poverty differently from adults, are more vulnerable to its ill effects, and have more immediate needs that conventional anti-poverty strategies do not address (CHIP, 2004; UNICEF, 2005b; Save the Children, 2005; CPAG, 2005; Vandemoortele, 2000; Oxfam, 2003; Minujin, 2005). Anti-poverty strategies need to take note of how poverty affects children differently than adults, and integrate policies that directly address child poverty.

The rest of this sub-section is a synopsis of some of the reasons why anti-poverty strategies should acknowledge and address child poverty. As mentioned above, this section will discuss the following topics:

- Poverty Cycle
- Difference with Adult Poverty
- Human Rights Approach
- Vulnerability
- Economic/Investment, Rate of Return
- Children in Conflict and Natural Disasters
- Child Poverty and Gender

### Poverty Cycle

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“In (the year) 2000, over 150 million pre-school children were estimated to be underweight and over 200 million children stunted. These figures imply that a shocking number of adults will suffer from ill health by 2020” (UNDP, 2004: pg. 4). This link between children and adults points to the undeniable fact that “poverty in childhood is a root cause of poverty in adulthood. Impoverished children often grow up to be impoverished parents who in turn bring up their own children in poverty. In order to break the generational cycle, poverty reduction must begin with children” (UNDP, 2004: pg. 15).

Childhood is the formative stage in life when people develop the physical, mental, emotional, and learning capacities that will influence the rest of their lives. “By the time we are ten, our capacity for basic learning has been determined. By the time we are 15, our body size, reproductive potential and general health have been profoundly influenced by what has happened in our lives until then” (UNDP, 2004: pg 3). Providing the needed resources and services during the first 15 years of children’s lives so that they can fully develop their physical, mental, emotional, and learning capacities, is vital to helping individuals reach their full potential in life and escape poverty (UNICEF, 2005b).

In essence, children living in poverty become adults living in poverty. To break the cycle, children must be provided with the appropriate food security, shelter, healthcare, education, public services (i.e. water and sanitation), and with a voice in the community (UNDP, 2004). These basic services will enhance children’s well-being and give them the basic tools to escape child poverty and break the generational poverty cycle.



## Difference with Adult Poverty

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Children's rights and special needs and their vulnerabilities are seldom recognized or directly addressed in anti-poverty strategies. Child poverty is simply not differentiated from general poverty (UNDP, 2004; Vandemoortele, 2000; CIDA, 2004b).

As will be discussed in Annex I, poverty is defined as the lack of resources and capabilities that prevent people from living a decent and independent life. Poverty distresses all groups – age, ethnic, and religious – and these groups share many of causes and effects of poverty. But “for children, there may be additional important consequences, such as having to drop out of school, missing out on critical health care, or being stigmatized by their peers for wearing old or torn clothing” (CHIP, 2004: pg. 1). Furthermore, children are likely to suffer permanent consequences from not having access to basic social services and family resources. Adults, on the other hand, indeed suffer from the ills of poverty, but the impact may not be as permanent as with children. “Children cannot reverse stunting. They cannot recover from preventable disabilities. Nor can they reclaim those 15 valuable years of growth and development later in life” (UNDP, 2004: pg. 3).

Similarly, children are impacted differently by conventional “development” policies. For example, the structural adjustment programs championed under the Washington Consensus had a great impact on children. In the name of fiscal austerity, structural adjustment programs cut spending on social services like education, healthcare, and meal subsidies. The cuts might only last a few years, but the impact that the short term austerity measures have on children last a lifetime (Vandemoortele, 2000). The cuts in social spending hurt social programs that benefit children, and children experience the bulk of the cuts. Adults, on the other hand, are not as critically affected by cuts in education and healthcare (CHIP, 2004).

It is essential to recognize that children are not poor by themselves, since they are not economically and legally empowered as

independent actors. It is necessary to place the issue of children living in poverty in a social context. Family composition, resource disruption within families, number and gender of children in a household, and the gender of the head of the household, among other issues, are all important factors to be taken into account both for measuring and addressing the effects of child poverty.

## Human Rights Based Approach

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Reducing child poverty contributes towards realizing children's rights to survive, develop, participate, and be protected. It implies fulfilling the obligations inherent in international human rights conventions, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which promises “every child a good start in life” (Vandemoortele, 2000: pg. 1). However, this legal commitment is still far from being fulfilled.

As will be seen in the next section, several organizations base their child poverty action plans on the CRC and other human rights documents. The UNDP, for example, defines child poverty as the denial of the socio-economic rights outlined in articles 26 and 27 of the CRC (UNDP, 2004). According to the CRC and to mechanisms of international law, states are legally responsible to ensure the “resources - for example health, education, and social welfare provision - for the family to fulfill its responsibilities to the child” (White, 2002). Likewise, UNICEF holds that “the concept of child poverty, and estimates of its extent, can be constructed on the basis of access to a number of specific economic and social rights. These rights and the ‘freedom from material and social deprivation’ include premature death, hunger, malnutrition, and lack of access to clean water, sanitation, education, health care and information” (UNICEF, 2004: pg. 2).

UNICEF is fully committed to realizing children's rights. To that end, “UNICEF pioneered a human rights-based approach to development” that is guided by the CRC as well as “other international human rights principles – universality, nondiscrimination,

the best interests of the child, participation and taking account of the views of the child” (UNICEF, 2005e: pg. 57). This human rights-based approach highlights the strong link between child poverty and human rights deprivations. Its application helps improve and sustain the realization of children’s rights and efforts to reduce child poverty by:

- Directing attention, long term commitment, resources, and development assistance from governments, donors, and international organizations and UN Agencies to (children)
- Supporting parents, caregivers and families to meet their responsibilities for the upbringing, care and development of their children
- Empowering parents, caregivers, women, families and civil society to participate in local and national decision-making and in democratic processes, and to hold the state accountable for the quality of services and availability of resources for children
- Building the capacity of the state to be accountable to its citizens through macro-economic and social policy, law, institutional reviews and reforms which are transparent and responsive to families’ needs
- Require a full analysis and understanding of the situation of children, as a basis for devising interventions which tackle its basic and underlying causes
- Ensuring that Poverty Reduction Strategies integrate gender analysis and recognize structural inequalities between boys and girls in the enjoyment of their rights
- Providing opportunities to children, adolescents and youth to express their views and participate in all matters affecting them, and ensuring that their views are given due weight according to their gender, age, level of knowledge and maturity
- Using and benefiting from international monitoring and reporting mechanisms and from the work of independent human rights treaty

bodies, such as General Comments and concluding observations and recommendations on state party implementation reports

Source: UNICEF, 2005e: pg. 58-59

The CRC, along with the socio-economic rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>1</sup> (UDHR), details the legal responsibilities that put the onus on the state and the international community to address child poverty (UNDP, 2004; White, 2002; and OHCHR, 2002; CHIP, 2004). This human rights-based approach involves a long-term investment in providing children with the resources and services to become active members of society who can influence their country and can hold “their government accountable for its promises” and commitments to human rights (UNICEF, 2005b: pg. 93)<sup>2</sup>.

## Vulnerability

Childhood is a very vulnerable stage. Young children are dependent on their parents or guardians for their needs. Children require the basic resources and services to develop mentally, physically, and emotionally. They need educational facilities, vaccinations, healthcare, security, nutrition, clean water, and a supportive environment to fully develop into healthy adults. Because of their special developmental needs during this “critical stage of life, children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse” (CHIP, 2004: pg. 2).

However, “children living in poverty face deprivations of many of their rights: survival, health and nutrition, education, participation, and protection from harm, exploitation and discrimination. Over 1 billion children are severely deprived of at least one of the essential goods and services they require to survive, grow and develop” (UNICEF, 2005b: pg. 15). Even in households that are not considered monetarily poor, children may not be allotted the resources or given

<sup>1</sup> Articles 22, 23, 24,25, and 26.

<sup>2</sup> Annex I contains a detailed discussion of human rights approach to poverty



access to the services necessary to ensure proper physical, mental, and emotional development. This is particularly true for “adopted children, child domestic workers, (and) girls” who are “denied access to resources and opportunities, even in households that might be thought of as well-off or ‘rich’” (CHIP, 2004: pg. 2).

“More than 10 million children still die each year from mostly preventable diseases – 150 million were estimated to be malnourished, some 600 million children still lived in poverty and more than 100 million – the majority of them girls – were not in school” (Gordon, *et al*, 2003: pg. 2). Such poverty and deprivation adversely affects children’s development. “Poverty hurts the physical and psychological health of girls and boys. It hinders their chances of acquiring the skills, capacities, and confidence they need to reach their full potential: ‘Poverty causes lifelong damage to children’s minds and bodies, turning them into adults who perpetuate the cycle of poverty by transmitting it to their children’” (CIDA, 2004b: pg. 1). At a time when children should be provided the needed resources to develop into healthy adults, poverty often denies them access to these resources.

### **Economic, Investment, & Rate of Return**

“What happens to children in their early years, and even before birth, significantly determines how well they develop and learn, and how much they will contribute, or cost, society as adults” (CPAG, 2003: pg. 12). Since childhood is such a critical time in life, it is economically sound to invest in anti-poverty projects that help children develop into healthy adults. Development economists, like Prebisch, Sen, and Solow, have all pointed to the importance of investing in people’s human capital to help an economy develop and grow. Investing in children’s human capital, is investing in the development of a country.

Additionally, as mentioned above, children embody the future. If they grow up in poverty without the resources to develop physical, mental, and emotional skills to become productive adults, then they are likely to grow up to be poor adults who tax, instead of contribute to, society (CPAG, 2003;

CHIPS, 2004; UNDP, 2004; CIDA, 2004). Investing in children’s wellbeing, thus, is a good way to provide children the resources to become healthy members of society.

Some Latin American and Caribbean nations that have increased spending on basic social services were able to rapidly achieve children’s well-being. Bolivia’s new national Insurance Program for Maternity and Childhood, for example, has resulted in “infant mortality throughout the region (to drop) from an average of 41 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 31 on average in 1998, and average under-5 mortality (to decrease) from 51 per 1,000 in 1990 to 39 per 1,000 in 1998, the lowest rate among developing regions” (ICC, 2000: pg. 6). In Brazil, a study also demonstrates the high returns of investing in early childcare. For example, “it is estimated that Brazilian boys who attend pre-school for two years will increase their earning power as adults by 18 percent” (ICC, 2000: pg. 10). The Brazilian and Bolivian cases are examples of how investing in basic services lead to decrease in the hardships experience by children and long-term financial returns.

Investing in women’s education is also central to reducing poverty among children. Strong associations between female education and economic development have been well documented. Besides the high correlation between the enrolment rate of girls in primary schools and GNP per capita, there is empirical evidence that girl education leads to better social indicators. Hartnett and Heneveld (1993) analyzed the impact of education on boys and girls. They found that that female education has far greater social returns than male education as additional schooling creates substantial social benefits. Educated women bring social benefits by having healthier, fewer and more educated children. Furthermore, each additional year of schooling is estimated to decrease the mortality of the under-five age group by 5 to 10 percent and the fertility rate by 10 percent.

## Children in Conflict and Natural Disasters

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Children are the most vulnerable group in conflict and emergency situations. Children “are too often forced to flee their homes, witness atrocities or even perpetrate war crimes themselves. Children are not responsible for war, yet it robs them of their childhood” (UNICEF, 2005b: pg. 39). Armed conflict deprives children of basic needs. For example, according to a study by the International Rescue Committee and the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women & Children, 27 million children and youth in conflict areas were deprived of formal education (Women’s Commission for Refugees and Women, 2004). Similarly, children in armed conflict are deprived of other basic needs, such as shelter, proper nutrition, and healthcare. These children need special attention. Conventional emergency response and anti-poverty programs may not recognize the importance of addressing the critical needs of children.

Similarly, in emergency situations, like natural disasters, the children must also be a priority group. Their special needs and vulnerability to illness, malnutrition, and security must be addressed. Furthermore, providing children a voice to help shape responses to emergency situations is also crucial to their own survival and development.

## Child Poverty and Gender

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In many life situations girls occupy precarious positions. According to the results

of a study conducted by the University of Bristol and the London School of Economics, about 600 million children suffer from poverty and 100 million were not in school - the majority of these are girls (Gordon, *et al*, 2003). In emergency situations girls tend to suffer more from the deprivation of basic needs, such as education (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women & Children, 2004). Such heightened vulnerability of girls to deprivation and child poverty may be based on cultural biases, and emphasizes that within the child poverty debate, gender issues should not go unnoticed.

Similarly, UNICEF’s State of the Children 2005 points out that child poverty is lowest in countries where women make up a high percentage of the labor force. “Higher employment rates among women (including those who are single parents) have contributed to reducing child poverty in the 1990s in a number of OECD countries” (UNICEF, 2005b: pg. 31). Pursuing anti-poverty strategies that provide economic empowerment to women may be a policy to help reduce child poverty.

Overall, there is limited information about the relationship between child poverty and gender. Many organizations and initiative target girls and education, but do not go further to discuss the relationship between girls and other types of deprivations. Further research is needed to study how child poverty affects girls differently from boys.

## SECTION 2 – DEFINING CHILD POVERTY

Child poverty is the poverty experienced during childhood by children and young people. It differs from adult poverty in that it has different causes and effects, and the impact of poverty during childhood has permanent effects on children. (CHIP, 2004; UNDP, 2004). As noted in the previous section, children are vulnerable to deprivation; even short periods of deprivation can impact long term growth. “Children experience poverty as an environment that is damaging to their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual development. Therefore, expanding the definition of child poverty beyond traditional conceptualizations, such as low household income or low levels of consumption, is particularly important. And yet, child poverty is rarely differentiated from poverty in general and its special dimensions are seldom recognized” (UNICEF, 2005a).

This section will present a summary of recent advances in the conceptual and practical areas of child poverty and summarize the background documentation and debate on the different ways that child poverty is defined and used to shape anti-poverty programs. By exploring the different conceptions of child poverty, this section aims to map the major issues around child poverty and provide readers with an understanding of the unique nature of child poverty. To that end, this section will review different definitions of child poverty and different conceptual frameworks used by some organizations when preparing a child poverty action plan. Overall, these definitions and conceptual frameworks are based on the deprivation of basic needs and on human rights principles.

It is important to pause here and explain further the deprivation of basic needs approach. This concept defines and identifies child poverty by focusing on children’s access to a set of basic needs and services. In a recent study commissioned by UNICEF and conducted by the University of Bristol and the London School of Economics, child poverty was identified and measured by fo-

cus on children’s access to the following basket of basic goods and services:

### Bristol’s Deprivation Indicators

1. *Access to food*
2. *Access to clean water*
3. *Access to sanitation facilities*
4. *Access to healthcare services*
5. *Access to shelter*
6. *Access to formal education*
7. *Access to information*

Sources: Gordon, *et al*, 2003; UNICEF, 2005b

These indicators, along with the Bristol study, will be discussed in much more detail in section three of this paper.

### Definitions of Child Poverty

There is no uniform approach for defining, identifying or measuring poverty. The debate over poverty is concerned with different potential causes of poverty and ways by which poverty can be measured and compared nationally and internationally<sup>3</sup>. The monetary approach is the most widely used approach to identifying and measuring poverty. This reduces poverty reduction strategies to increasing individuals’ income levels (Vandemoortele, 2000). Notwithstanding the widespread use of the monetary approach, several development organizations see poverty as a phenomenon that cannot be defined only in monetary terms. They recognize that poverty is multifaceted and cannot be measured and resolved only through monetary means. In particular, organizations that work on child poverty issues view poverty as a multifaceted problem that requires comprehensive strategies to address its many features.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the poverty debate and the major approaches debated in the development field, please refer to Annex I.

There are many reasons why the monetary approach is not appropriate to measuring child poverty. The monetary approach, for example, gives little consideration to household structure, gender, and age. It ignores that children's needs are different from those of adults (Vandemoortele, 2000; Minujin, 2005). The standard monetary solution of increasing individuals' income level ignores the fact that disadvantaged groups are discriminated against and may not be given proportional shares of household income (Minujin, 2005). Numerous studies have shown that within households "the burden of poverty (is) being unequally heaped in accordance with age and gender biases that adversely affect women and children in particular" (Feeny and Boyden, 2003: pg. 6).

Additionally, the monetary approach neglects to note that children's wellbeing also depends on non-market-based goods. The availability of basic services and a safe environment to play is not always based on household income levels. These services tend to be social services that individuals have little control over. Because of these deficiencies, the monetary approach is not appropriate to identifying and measuring child poverty.

However, like the debate over the exact definition of poverty, there is no set definition for child poverty. Subsequently it is an attempt to summarize different characterizations of child poverty used by organizations that directly work with children issues. As mentioned above, these definitions are based on a combination of concepts of the deprivation approach to identifying and measuring child poverty and human rights principles.

## UNICEF

UNICEF defines child poverty as the deprivation of social services. In works like the Bristol study, UNICEF has listed a basket of goods and services that it considers essential to ensure children's wellbeing. Thus, UNICEF's working definition of child poverty, presented in *The State of the Worlds' Children 2005*, is:

*Children living in poverty [are those who] experience deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal members of society*

"This definition suggests that the poverty children experience with their hands, minds and hearts is **interrelated**" (UNICEF, 2005b: pg. 18). For example, material poverty leads to malnutrition, which in turn affects health and education, which in turn may impact a child's long term development. Furthermore, to address the lack of financial resources, children from poor households may be engaged in child labor which may negatively impact a child's cognitive and physical development by depriving the child from school. Children in rich households may not be free of suffering from deprivation. "Living in an environment that provides little stimulation or emotional support to children ... can remove much of the positive effect of growing up in a materially rich household" (UNICEF, 2005b: pg. 18). In essence, UNICEF's definition stresses the multidimensional and interrelated nature of child poverty.

UNICEF's definition also suggests that economic security is only one of the many components to addressing child poverty. "Other aspects of material deprivation like access to basic services, as well as issues related with discrimination and exclusion that affect self-esteem and psychological development, among others, are also central to the definition of child poverty" (Minujin, 2005: pg 2).

Such a definition influences UNICEF's policy recommendations to address child poverty. UNICEF adopts measures that account for the different components of child poverty. Furthermore, as mentioned above, UNICEF is also an advocate of a human rights-based approach to defining child poverty, which holds that eliminating child poverty will help realize children's rights.

## CCF

The Christian Children's Fund (CCF) has endeavored to define child poverty. In 2002 it commissioned a study on the experience and impact of poverty on children (Feeny and Boyden, 2003). As part of this effort CCF consulted with children and their families to learn directly from them how children experienced poverty.

CCF found that the generally accepted usage of poverty – “*The state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possession*” – gives rise to two concepts that are important to rethinking the definition and measurement of child poverty. First, that poverty is relative across times and societies; and secondly, “that poverty is conceived in terms of the ability to purchase goods and services (money) or their ownership (material possessions)” (Feeny and Boyden, 2003: pg. 5). These concepts led to the widely accepted concept of identifying and measuring poverty through a monetary poverty line, which, as mentioned above and echoed by the CCF report, is inadequate to measuring child poverty. Children lack access and control over income, and to gage a child's well-being by consumption at the household level is wrong because it neglects that children do not proportionately benefit from a household's income or consumption (Feeny and Boyden, 2003). Additionally, as Arjun Appadurai notes, monetary solutions focus on physical aspects, and neglect the intangible aspects of poverty: feeling of security, lack of freedom from harassment and abuse, social exclusion (Feeny and Boyden, 2003). Thus, CCF sees child poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon that is made up of both tangible and intangible components.

“For children, CCF has found that poverty is a deeply relational and relative, dynamic and multi-dimensional experience. Poor children are **deprived** of essential materials conditions and services; they are **excluded** on the basis of their age, gender, class, caste, etc.; and they are **vulnerable** to the increasing array of threats in their environments. Thus, CCF views child poverty as comprising three inter-related domains:

**Deprivation:** *a lack of material conditions and services generally held to be essential to the development of children's full potential.*

**Exclusion:** *the result of unjust processes through which children's dignity, voice, and rights are denied, or their existence threatened.*

**Vulnerability:** *an inability of society to cope with existing or probable threats to children in their environment.*

Source: Minujin, 2005: pg. 3

CCF's definition of child poverty points to its commitment to supporting comprehensive poverty reduction strategies that recognize the unique nature of child poverty, and also encourage a **participatory** approach that includes children's voices.

## CHIP

The Childhood Poverty Research and Policy Center (CHIP) is a joint project between Save the Children and the Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC). In its document, “Children and Poverty: Some questions Answered”, CHIP offers the following definition for child poverty:

*Childhood poverty means children and young people growing up without access to different types of resources that are vital for their wellbeing and for them to fulfill their potential. By resources we mean economic, social, cultural, physical, environmental and political resources*

The following bullet-points were taken directly from CHIP. They detail CHIP's definition of Child poverty.

“Childhood poverty means a child:

- **Growing up without an adequate livelihood** - without access to the financial and nutritional resources needed for survival and develop-



- ment (economic, physical and environmental resources).
- **Growing up without opportunities for human development** – opportunities to develop as a healthy person who will fulfill their potential in life. Opportunities include access to quality education and life skills, health and water/sanitation (social, cultural and physical resources).
  - **Growing up without family and community structures that nurture and protect them** - without having parents/guardians with time (or ability/desire) to care for them; without an extended family/community that can cope if parents and guardians are not able (or not there); or without a community that cares for and protects its younger generation (social and cultural resources). Children consulted in a Ugandan study, for example, also stressed that this involves their emotional, personal and spiritual development needs not being addressed.
  - **Growing up without opportunities for voice.** For both adults and children, powerlessness and lack of voice (political resources) often underpins other aspects of poverty.”

Source: (CHIPS, 2004: pg. 1)

Like UNICEF, CHIP's child poverty definition is multifaceted and stresses that the different aspects of child poverty are **interrelated**; and like UNICEF, CHIP supports comprehensive anti-poverty strategies that address the different aspects of child poverty.

## UNDP

UNDP has “advocated a broader understanding of poverty beyond the traditional focus on income deprivation of most poverty literature” (UNDP, 2004:pg. 2). Overall, it advocates a hybrid approach – a mixture of the basic needs principles and the human rights approach. As for child poverty, UNDP holds that child poverty is the denial of the socio-economic rights that have been outlined in articles 26 and 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): “Article 27

outlines for all children ‘the right to a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development’” (UNDP, 2004: pg 12). Furthermore, UNDP holds that in order to break the cycle of child poverty, children need access to “food security, shelter, and water and sanitation, all of which are essential to enhancing children’s well-being” (UNDP, 2004: pg. 4).

As mentioned above, the inclusion of human rights vernacular changes the issue of dealing with child poverty from a moral issue into a LEGAL responsibility that binds governments, parents, and the international community. States have sign on to international conventions and treaties that makes poverty issues into a legal obligation. The incorporation of the human rights language into the conceptualization of child poverty draws a link between child poverty and the violation of children’s human rights.

UNDP does not provide an exact definition for child poverty. It identifies a conceptual framework based on the economic and social rights included in the CRC. This human rights-based framework shapes UNDP’s child poverty programs. Like the UNDP, many organizations center their child poverty programs on the CRC and work done by UNICEF and other large organizations that work on child poverty issues.

## CIDA

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is another organization that uses a human rights-based approach in its child poverty action plan. “This approach is based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which views girls and boys as full-fledged persons who are active, able, and necessary participants in their own development and that of their communities” (CIDA, 2004a:pg. 3). Furthermore, CIDA sees human rights violations as the results of child poverty: “Poverty prevents children from reaching their full potential. It denies them human rights—like those related to education, health and nutrition, participation in decisions that affect their lives, and freedom from abuse, exploitation, and discrimination” (CIDA, 2004a: pg. 1). CIDA, like many development agen-



cies, relies on the monetary approach to identify and measure children living in poverty. It cites a UN study that identifies “40 percent of all children in the least developed countries are struggling to survive on less than US\$1 per day” (CIDA, 2004b: pg. 1).

Even though, it relies on a monetary approach to measure child poverty, CIDA supports a human rights-based approach as an effective poverty reduction strategy. “Realizing children’s rights is essential to reducing poverty in a sustainable way. And protecting the most vulnerable children — who are often neglected by traditional interventions in health, education, and nutrition — is key to realizing children’s rights” (CIDA 2004b: pg. 1).

CIDA, like UNDP, does not provide an exact definition of child poverty. And like UNDP, it relies on human rights principles to shape its child poverty programs.

### Save the Children

Save the Children also makes a strong connection between child poverty and human rights. It argues that fighting child poverty is much more than a development concern, but a human rights concern. Furthermore, like CIDA, Save the Children uses a monetary approach to identify children living in poverty, and proposes a human rights approach to design anti-poverty policies that address child poverty. Because there is a link between child poverty and human rights, anti-poverty strategies should be “based explicitly on the norms and values set out in international human rights law” (Save the Children, 2003: Pg. 3).

Save the Children’s human rights-based approach is anchored on the “A World Fit for Children” resolution adopted by the General Assembly during the UN’s 2002 Special Session on Children. The resolution calls for commitment to the following principles and objectives:

- **Place children first:** the best interests of the child become the primary consideration.
- **Invest in children** as a key action to break the cycle of poverty and

eradicate it.

- **Leave no child behind:** prescribing to the principles of equality and nondiscrimination.
- **Care for every child:** ensuring that its survival, protection, and growth and development in good health and with proper nutrition is the essential foundation of human development.
- **Educate every child.**
- **Protect children from harm and exploitation.**
- **Protect children from war.**
- **Combat HIV/Aids.**
- **Listen to children and ensure their participation.**

Source: Save the Children, 2003, Pg. 10<sup>4</sup>; UN, 2002.

These principles clearly indicate Save the Children’s view that child poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that needs to be grounded on a comprehensive human rights-based approach.

### IDASA

The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) is a national NGO that has examined the relationship between children’s rights, state budgets, and poverty reduction. In a 2000 study entitled “*Child Poverty and the Budget 2000 – Are Poor Children Put First?*”, IDASA defined child poverty in terms of four categories of suffering/deprivation. These are:

1. **Insufficient income and income earning opportunities:** Here the study refers to children suffering because they worry about the low level of household income and their own lack of income.
2. **Lack of human development opportunities:** Here the reference is

<sup>4</sup> Report of the United Nations General Assembly 27th Special Session, 2002 , p 6

to children not having access to social and basic services such as health, education and sanitation services and being denied access to recreational facilities and to the impact of this lack of access.

3. **Feelings of economic and physical insecurity:** Economic insecurity refers to children's concern about a sudden fluctuation in the households' income and access to public services. Fluctuations are usually tied to adverse economic shocks (unemployment, price changes) and death in the family (from sicknesses such as HIV/Aids). The impact includes children being taken out of school, child-headed households, street children, and dissolution of the family unit.
4. **Feelings of powerlessness:** The reference here is to children feeling oppressed within the family unit and feeling excluded from or scorned by the community.

Source: Streak, 2000, pg. 6-7

IDASA developed its broad definition of child poverty through a participatory effort which first consulted and incorporated the voices of some of South Africa's children on what it means to be poor. Second, IDASA considered the definitions used by international poverty researchers, and lastly, it "drew upon the definition of poverty implicit in the Convention on the Rights of the Child" (Streak, 2000: pg. 7).

### Implication of Child Poverty definitions

One of the important implications of defining child poverty is that it has an impact on poverty reduction strategies, as well as the development of indicators for tracking the success of poverty reduction strategies. All the definitions of child poverty reviewed above go beyond the popular one-dimensional monetary approach. The defini-

tions above considered "material deprivation (including basic social services), as well as additional essential factors that enable a child to survive, develop, and participate in society" (Minujin, 2005: pg. 3). The existence of a child poverty definition should encourage policy makers and organizations to recognize and directly address the special needs of children living in poverty. Section four of this paper will discuss the impact that the recognition of child poverty is having on national and international anti-poverty policies, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategies Papers (PRSPs).

The implication of a child poverty definition is that it highlights the importance of direct policy interventions that address children's deprivation, exclusion and vulnerability.

## Child Participation

### DFID - Efforts to Consult Children and Young People<sup>5</sup>

DFID has long been committed to a participatory approach to development that enables people to make an active contribution to the policies and programmes that directly affect... In "Realising human rights for poor people" published in 2000, DFID set out a policy that showed that "participation" was also a right. We fully support the right of people from all sectors in society, including children and young people, to have a say in the effort to eradicate poverty. We believe it is vital to include their views, along with those of other groups in society, in consultation processes, for example in preparing and implementing developing countries' own development agendas, known as Poverty Reduction Strategies.

In recent years the active involvement of children and young people in national and international policy discussions and programming has increased significantly. For example, more than 600 children from around the world went to the UN Special Session on Children in 2002 to speak to world leaders about the issues they face. For the first time ever, many of them were delegates on official government delegations – including the UK's.

There are many examples of ... support to the involvement of children in development.

- Much of the work of UNICEF is about giving children a greater voice in their future.
- In the Malawi Free Primary Education Programme, participation of children, parents and communities is being built into the planning and implementation and a number of key concerns have been expressed by children, particularly girls, about choices and risks they face when participating in school.

Save The Children (SC UK) is the leading organisation working on children's participation in development globally (both the South and the North) ... Save the Children programmes have enabled children and young people to learn about their rights, including their right to have their voices heard on decisions that affect them, and improved their ability to speak up for themselves...

UNICEF has been instrumental in highlighting the importance of children's participation in development issues, and this was the subject of the "State of the World's Children" report in 2003. UNICEF also has a global discussion website "Voices of Youth" where young people can express their views. As advocates for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF campaigns in many countries around the world to support a child's right to participate in decision-making processes that may affect their lives.

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<sup>5</sup> Text taken from DFID's "Learning to Listen: DFID Action plan on children and young people's participation 2004-05", (DFID, 2004)

## SECTION 3 – CHILD POVERTY FINDINGS & MEASUREMENTS

Poverty is not easily measurable. The multidimensional nature of poverty includes quantifiable variables (such as income, consumption, and access to basic services), but it also includes capabilities variables that may not be so easily measurable – like the capability to participate in society without facing discrimination. Because of these complexities, most development agencies rely on the monetary approach to measure poverty (poverty line). The monetary approach is a very ineffective and, in many ways, counterproductive way to measure poverty:

- It ignores the multi-dimensional nature of poverty
- It uses an income-based poverty-line to identify the poor, neglecting the different characteristics of households
- It overlooks the different needs of people- i.e. a disabled person may need more resources to accomplish the same tasks as a healthy adult
- It disregards the importance of public services and public goods, like education, healthcare, water, sanitation, etc.
- It concentrates anti-poverty strategies on increasing an individual's income level, rather than on investing in public services.

For an extensive discussion of the monetary approach and other approaches to measure poverty, please refer to Annex I.

This subsection will present the results of some international and national efforts to measure child poverty. It will present poverty measure efforts from both less developed and developed countries, as well as different methodologies.

Many parts of the world (East and South Asia, the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean) saw robust and consistent economic growth throughout the 1990s. However, constant, market-led, growth was enough to reduce child poverty during the 1990s. “Among the many reasons for the shortfall, one stands out: under-investment in basic social services” (Vandemoortele, 2000:pg. i).

The growth of the 1990s did not reduce global poverty or national inequality levels. The market led economic growth of the 1990s resulted in:

1. Increase in the concentration of income, assets, skills and capabilities in the hands of the rich
2. Increase in inequality between developed and less developed countries
3. Decrease in public spending on social programs that benefit the poor and working class
4. “Since 1987, the number of people in developing countries, other than in East Asia and the Pacific, with less than \$1 a day, had increased by 12 million a year” (Gordon, *et al*, 2003)

Sources: Vandemoortele, 2000; Gordon, *et al*, 2003.

In September 2002, the UN General Assembly's special session on children found that there had been some improvement in the condition of children.

- Under-5 mortality fell by 3 million
- 28 million fewer children under 5 suffered from the debilitating effects of malnutrition
- 175 countries were polio-free
- 104 countries had eliminated neonatal tetanus

Sources: Vandemoortele, 2000; Gordon, *et al*, 2003.

However, as mentioned above, “10 million children still died each year from mostly preventable diseases – 150 million were estimated to be malnourished, some 600 million children still lived in poverty and more than

### Poverty Trends

100 million – the majority girls – were not in school” (Gordon, *et al*, 2003: pg.2). Thus, after the economic growth period of the 1990s, child poverty, and poverty in general, remains an alarming problem. A decade of market led economic growth has been unable to reduce poverty.

### Child Poverty as Severe Deprivation – Bristol Study

The deprivation approach to measuring poverty looks at a set of observable and demonstrable disadvantages. “The notion of deprivation focuses attention on the circumstances that surround children, casting poverty as an attribute of the environment they live and grow in” (UNICEF, 2005b: pg. 20). A team of researchers from the University of Bristol and the London School of Economics conducted an empirical study that established seven measures of basic needs and looked at how children in developing countries are affected by severe deprivations. This study is “the first ever scientific measurement of the extent and depth of child poverty in all the developing regions of the world” (Gordon, *et al*, 2003: pg. 1). The measures of child poverty are based on internationally agreed definitions based on child rights. The measures are: adequate nutrition, safe drinking water, decent sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, and information (Gordon, *et al*, 2003; UNICEF, 2005b; Minujin, 2005).

#### Bristol’s Deprivation Indicators

1. *Severe food deprivation*: children whose heights and weights for their age were more than 3 standard deviations below the median of the international reference population, that is, severe anthropometric failure.
2. *Severe water deprivation*: children who only had access to surface water (for example, rivers) for drinking or who lived in households where the nearest source of water was more than 15 minutes away (indicators of severe deprivation of water quality or quantity).

3. *Severe deprivation of sanitation facilities*: children who had no access to a toilet of any kind in the vicinity of their dwelling, that is, no private or communal toilets or latrines.
4. *Severe health deprivation*: children who had not been immunized against any diseases or young children who had a recent illness involving diarrhea and had not received any medical advice or treatment.
5. *Severe shelter deprivation*: children in dwellings with more than five people per room (severe overcrowding) or with no flooring material (for example, a mud floor).
6. *Severe educational deprivation*: children aged between 7 and 18 who had never been to school and were not currently attending school (no professional education of any kind).
7. *Severe information deprivation*: children aged between 3 and 18 with no access to radio, television, telephone or newspapers at home

Source: Gordon, *et al*, 2003, pg. 7-8

Child poverty, or severe deprivation, is thus considered the non-fulfillment of any of the indicators noted above. “Children who suffer from these levels of severe deprivation are very likely to be living in absolute poverty because, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the cause of severe deprivation of basic human need is invariably a result of lack of resources/income” (Gordon, *et al*, 2003: pg. 8).

The study found that 56 percent of children in developing countries – just over one billion children – suffer from one or more forms of severe deprivations. South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa had severe deprivation rates of over 80 percent. More poignantly, rural children in these two regions had severe deprivation rates of more than 90

percent. The following box summarizes the results of the study by deprivation indicator:

#### Deprivation Findings

Out of a population size of over 1.8 billion children in the developing countries, these were the results of the Bristol study:

1. *Severe food deprivation:* 15 percent of children under five in the developing world are severely food deprived
2. *Severe water deprivation:* Nearly 376 million children, 20 percent, do not have access to safe water sources or have more than a 15 minute walk to water
3. *Severe deprivation of sanitation facilities:* More than half a billion children, 31 percent, suffer from sanitation deprivation
4. *Severe health deprivation:* 265 million children, 15 percent, suffer from health deprivation
5. *Severe shelter deprivation:* More than 500 million children, 34 percent, suffer from shelter deprivation
6. *Severe educational deprivation:* 134 million children aged 7 and 18, 13 percent, have never been to school
7. *Severe information deprivation:* almost half a billion children, 25 percent, suffer from information deprivation

Source: Gordon, *et al*, 2003: pg. 8

These results indicate that the majority of children in developing countries are suffering from severe deprivation that will adversely impact their development.

More localized deprivation studies can be effective tools for policy makers. The results of localized deprivation studies can provide clear indications of the exact needs of children living in poverty.

#### Child Poverty as Severe Deprivation – Young Lives Project

Similar to the Bristol study, The *Young Lives Project* is a British Department for International Development (DFID) funded international collaborative study to investigate the changing nature of child poverty. Like the Bristol study, the Young Lives' Project seeks to "improve our understanding of the causes and consequences of childhood poverty" (UNDP, 2004: pg. 5). However, where as the Bristol study aimed to provide a "snapshot" measure of child poverty today, the Young Lives' Project aims to address the lack of information on **changes** in children's wellbeing over time. It is a long term project that aims to follow "nearly 12,000 children and their families over 15 years in four countries" (Ethiopia, Peru, Vietnam and India) (UNDP, 2004: pg. 5).

The project tries to examine all aspects of children's lives, including:

#### Young Lives Indicators

1. *Access to basic services:* Access to electricity, safe drinking water, and toilet facilities
2. *Access to Primary healthcare and children's health:* Vaccination, prevalence of childhood diseases, distance to medical care
3. *Child caring and rearing*
4. *Child malnutrition*
5. *Literacy and numeracy*
6. *Child work*
7. *Social capital among community*

The project sends enumerators every three years to visit the selected children and collect data on the deprivation indicators (MRC, 2001). The first round of data collection found that in all four countries children experienced high levels of deprivations. In Ethiopia, for example, "infant mortality in 2001 was 116 deaths per 1,000 live births compared with a regional average of 107. Only 34 percent of children aged 7-12 were



enrolled in primary school in 2000 despite the fact that close to half the population is younger than 15 years of age” (UNDP, 2004: pg. 5). Furthermore, the study found:

- limited number of household had access to basic services like electricity, safe drinking water, and sanitation service
- 96 percent of rural mothers gave birth at home without medical assistance
- 20 percent of children had not been vaccinated against BCG and measles
- 25 percent of households reported the death of a child under the age of five
- A large proportion of Ethiopian Children show signs of wasting and stunting

Source: UNDP, 2004: pg. 5-6

In Peru, the project found similar results. Despite averaging 7 percent annual GDP growth from 1993 to 1997, poverty indicators in 2000 were at 1994 levels. As to children’s wellbeing, the project found:

- 30 percent of children in poor households experienced stunting, compared to 12 percent from better-off families
- Diarrhea and acute respiratory diseases were causes of preventable morbidity among Peruvian children
- While 90 percent of mothers had received prenatal care, only 20 percent of very poor women delivered their babies in health facilities, compared with 94 percent of better-off women
- Only 9 percent of poor households had access to electricity, 41 percent had access to piped water, and 47 percent had latrine or toilet facilities in their homes
- Peru has achieved universal primary school enrollment, but the quality of educational services is very low

Source: UNDP, 2004: pg. 6

Since the mid 1990s, Vietnam has been experiencing rapid market-led growth. Along with the rapid growth, poverty indicators have decreased from 58 percent in 1993, to 29 percent in 2002. However, the market-led growth is also being accompanied by an increase in income inequality, and inequality in the access to basic services like healthcare and education. The

data collected on children resulted in the following findings:

- Child malnutrition remains a public health problem. The prevalence of underweight among 1 year old children was 80 percent higher in rural areas than in urban areas. Children from poor households have 1.6 to three times greater prevalence of acute malnutrition as do children from better-off households.
- Like in Peru, school enrollment is almost universal in Vietnam, but the quality of education in poor areas is low. Rural literacy and numeracy in among eight year old children are about 10 percent less than in urban area, and more than half of the poorest children are able to write at the level expected for their age.
- Only 43 percent of poor households have access to electricity, compared to 100 percent among better-off households.
- Approximately 85 percent of children from the poorest households live in dwellings with mud floors, and 68 percent use unsafe sources of water.

Source: UNDP, 2004: pg. 7-8

Lastly, India “is undergoing a process of liberalization that is referred to nationally as LPG (‘liberalization, privatization and globalization’)” (Young Lives, 2004a). The market-led liberalization process is resulting in economic growth and social development. Despite the recent years of growth, India still has low Human Development Indicators. In regards to children, the Young Lives’ Project found that:

- Child mortality below the age of 5 decreased slightly in the last decade but remains high at 85.5 per 1000 children, and is higher for girls than boys.
- Immunization levels are at only 40 percent.
- As part of the LPG plan, social sector spending in AP has been reduced over the last decade, user charges have been introduced in hospitals, and agricultural subsidies have been removed.

Source: Young Lives, 2004a

The results of the Young Lives' Project are similar to the results found by the Bristol study. Poor children are suffering from deprivation of basic needs like clean water, quality education, electricity, proper dwelling, etc. Rural children and girls, in particular, are vulnerable to suffering from deprivation (Young Lives, 2004a; UNDP, 2004; UNICEF, 2005b; MCR, 2001). These results, like the ones above, point to the need to develop targeted anti-poverty strategies that address the deprivations that poor children suffer from.

### Child Poverty as Monetary Approach

The monetary approach has two methodologies for measuring poverty: absolute poverty and relative poverty. The former establishes a poverty line and counts people whose income is less than the poverty line poor. The international poverty line used by many development agencies (i.e. the WB, IMF) is the US\$1 a day<sup>6</sup>. In 1998, "the number of income-poor in developing countries was estimated at 1.2 billion ... Children represent at least half of the income-poor" (Vandemoortele, 2000: pg. 3).

In a 1997 study of poverty in South Africa, Angus Deaton and Christina Paxson used a poverty line that roughly corresponded to the international US\$1 a day poverty line. They studied the composition of people living below the poverty line and found that young adults make up the smallest fraction of people living in poverty, "followed by the elderly (who receive a monthly cash payment from the government), then older and younger children" (Deaton and Paxson, 1997: pg. 14). Similarly, Deaton and Paxson also studied poverty in Ghana, Pakistan, Taiwan, Thailand, and Ukraine. The study followed a similar methodology to South Africa, an absolute poverty line that was equivalent to US\$1 a day<sup>7</sup>. Their study accounted for family size and structure between these countries. It found that children made up a higher percent of the income-

poor than either adults or the elderly (Deaton and Paxson, 1997: pg. 14). It is important to note that in their study Deaton and Paxson assumed that household resources are shared equally among all members, which allots more resources to children than in reality. In actuality, this assumption is hard to defend. Therefore, the Deaton and Paxton monetary study is probably undercounting the number of children living in poverty.

The US also favors an absolute monetary approach to measuring child poverty. It defines a poverty line as the amount of money needed "to purchase a defined quantity of goods and services" (UNICEF-IRC, 2005: pg. 6). In the US "the current official poverty measure, originally adopted in the 1960s, consists of a set of thresholds for families of different sizes and composition that are compared to a family resource measure to determine a family's poverty status" (Iceland, *et al*, 2001:pg. 399). Using this absolute poverty line methodology, 19.9 percent of children in the US live in poverty; the poverty rates for adults and the elderly are 10.9 and 10.5 percent, respectively. In 1997, "children constituted about 40 percent of the poverty population, though only about a quarter of the total population" (Iceland, *et al*, 2001:pg. 399). According to these findings, children in the US disproportionately make up a large portion of people living in poverty.

Unlike the absolute poverty line approach, relative poverty measures have poverty lines that adjust from country to country. "Most other OECD members, including those in the European Union, have leant towards relative poverty lines drawn at a given percentage of median national incomes" (UNICEF-IRC, 2005: pg. 6). For example, Jonathan Bradshaw, from the University of York, used a relative poverty line to study child poverty in the UK. He looked at children living in households with income below 50 percent of the national mean household income (Bradshaw, 2002). Bradshaw's study found that in Britain the proportion of children living in poor households "increased more than threefold between 1979 and 1999/00" (Bradshaw, 2002: pg. 131). Overall he found that Britain's level of child poverty was by far the highest in the

<sup>6</sup> Annex I provides a discussion on how poverty lines are created.

<sup>7</sup> In Taiwan and Ukraine, the study looked at the poorest quintile.

EU. Similarly, he notes that in a study of child poverty in 25, mostly rich, countries, children make up the largest percentage of people living in poverty.

UNICEF's Innocenti Research Center's 2005 report on Child Poverty in Rich Countries also uses a relative poverty line to identify and measure child poverty in OECD countries. "The principal measure of child poverty ... is a poverty line drawn at 50 percent of current median income for the country concerned" (UNICEF-IRC, 2005: pg. 11). The report argues that by using a relative poverty line, child poverty rates can only fall if children living in low-income families disproportionately benefit more than better-off households from the benefits of economic progress.

Table 1 shows the results of the Innocenti report. It shows that even in OECD countries like UK, Italy, USA, and Mexico, a significant percentage of children are living in poverty. Moreover, out of the 14 countries with data points, only five countries experienced a drop in the number of children living in poverty. Child poverty in the other countries actually worsened.

Countries	50%	% Change In child poverty in the 1990s
Finland	2.8	0.8
Norway	3.4	-3.2
Sweden	4.2	-0.2
Belgium	7.7	0.2
Hungary	8.8	13.5
Luxembourg	9.1	0.1
Netherlands	9.8	0.3
Germany	10.2	1.2
Austria	10.2	-
Poland	12.7	4.7
Canada	14.9	-1.3
UK	15.4	-10.8
Italy	16.6	4.1
USA	21.9	-7.3
Mexico	27.7	8.4

Source: UNICEF-IRC, 2005: pg. 11 & 13

**Table 1- Percentage of Children Living below 50 percent of Median National Income**

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## SECTION 4 – POLICIES FOR REDUCING CHILD POVERTY

For a long time, poverty reduction strategies neglected, or simply did not prioritize, the special needs of children living in poverty and the need to adopt direct policies to deal with child poverty. This section explores how different national and international policies are trying to tackle child poverty. First this section presents the link between PRSPs and child poverty. Then it moves on to discussing national and international poverty reduction strategies.

Overall, this section will present information on how different stakeholders in a society – the government, donors, activists, civil society organizations, and the poor (including children) – need to be part of designing a poverty reduction strategy, in order for the needs of the poor to be effectively addressed.

In this section, interventions to reduce child poverty will be addressed from a multi-dimensional viewpoint. This means that the aspects of children’s deprivation – such as water, health, shelter, sanitation, and education – will be analyzed integrally and not separately. The strategies presented below will point to the importance of a universal and participatory effort to help develop a national approach to deal with child poverty.

### Policy implications

Some development organizations are endeavoring to highlight child poverty as a large component of national poverty that must be included in the poverty reduction strategy process. As was mentioned before, one of the important aspects of defining child poverty is that it has an impact on poverty reduction strategies, as well as the development of indicators for tracking the success of poverty reduction strategies. All the definitions of child poverty reviewed above go beyond the popular one-dimensional monetary approach. The definitions above considered “material deprivation (including

basic social services), as well as additional essential factors that enable a child to survive, develop, and participate in society” (Minujin, 2005: pg. 3). The existence of child poverty definition encourages policy makers and organizations to directly address the special needs of children.

(Furthermore, any definition of) children poverty has practical implications for policy advocacy and programs. The following are a few of the possible direct applications:

1. **Influence the nature of policy dialogue** on poverty reduction. For instance, poverty reduction policies would need to account for a broader definition of poverty, and for children’s experience of it.
2. **Influence policy debates on social sector spending.** For example in dialogue on social and economic policy issues, would need to consider the effect of liberalization, privatization, globalization, etc. on the well-being of children and families.
3. **Influence the design of indicators.** The socio-economic and demographic indicators that capture information on children need to be informed with the alternative definition.

Source: Minujin, 2005: pg. 4

### PRSPs and child poverty

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) is an initiative led by World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to incorporate the voice of less developed countries in constructing poverty reduction strategies. PRSPs are intended to be the

product of a national dialogue about poverty that incorporates the voice of the government, civil society organizations, the private sector, and the public. The aim of a PRSP is to create a detailed national roadmap that identifies the poor, their needs, and a strategy how to meet those needs.

The PRSP process has considerable significance for poor children in developing countries. However, this statement is often not reflected when poverty reduction policies and programs are put into practice because they do not specifically prioritize children and improve children's future opportunities. "Children feature more prominently in poverty analysis than in policy an action" (Marcus and Wilkinson, 2002: pg. 38).

To address PRSP's inadequacy with confronting child poverty, it is recognized that the PRSP approach should be guided by the following core principles:

- **Multidimensional approach:** PRSPs should recognize the multidimensional nature of poverty, embracing all relevant policies and providing a coherent framework for them. Building a PRSP that takes human rights into account could bring together diverse social actors to promote wider debate and empower the poor, rather than simply directing development efforts at poor people (UNICEF, 2004; CHIP, 2003; GDI 2002).
- **Focusing:** children and young people need more targeted policies that recognize their needs and rights to survival, protection, development and participation - without discrimination. Children and young people should be located them within demographic and poverty profiles that frame PRSPs and provide support for particularly vulnerable groups (Save the Children, 2003; UNDP, 2003)

- **Voice to the children:** without exception, the perception of children's and youth's social reality is fundamental throughout the whole PRSPs' process because they are holders of rights and not simply the object of social measures (Heidel, 2004).
- **Active participation:** it is basic to promote broad-based participation of the poor, of civil society organizations, of governmental institutions at national and sub-national levels and by the private sector at all operational stages to design, implement and monitor the PRSP process (GDI, 2002).
- **Partnership-oriented and country-driven:** PRSPs should be designed by the developing country itself in co-ordination with development partners. The poverty reduction strategy to be designed by the partner should be developed in a joint effort, not only with the donors but also with diverse social groups in the country. PRSPs should be owned by the developing country, prioritizing in such a way as to make implementation feasible, in both fiscal and institutional terms, and building of national capacity to manage the development process (GDI, 2002).
- **Policy timing and scope:** to tackle child poverty, PRSPs need both policies that address the shorter-term situation and policies aimed at longer-term (CHIP, 2003; UNDP 2003).

While there is considerable diversity among PRSPs, with regards to child poverty, there are a number of commonalities in the kind of analysis employed, the kinds of



strategies given highest priority, and the policy areas and issues which receive little attention (CHIP, 2002). “The general policy orientation in all strategies tends to emphasize growth, social services, and improved governance. Faith in the power of growth alone, or almost alone, to reduce poverty is strong. In some countries this is not tempered even when the historical record, referred to in the PRSP, shows that poverty has increased or failed to fall during periods of strong economic growth. This is of particular concern both because the poorest groups often do not benefit even where better-off poor people do, and because growing inequality can have numerous destabilizing consequences. On the basis of existing evidence, most poverty reduction strategies appear weakly redistributive” (CHIP, 2002: pg. 45).

Heidel (2004: pg.17) indicates that “almost two thirds of all poverty reduction strategy papers (do) not contribute to the implementation of the rights of the child simply because they practically **ignore** the living and working conditions of the majority of children and youth. Based on this fact alone, by no means should all donor assistance be carried out within the PRSP process. Instead it is the essential and urgent task of development work to qualify the PRSP process so that it contributes to a sustainable reduction of poverty and strengthening the rights of the child. Only then can they be announced as the (full) framework of development cooperation.”

According to Caroline Harper “it is one thing to know the policy areas that are important for addressing childhood poverty and intergenerational transmissions. Acting on that knowledge, however, appears more difficult. The way in which mainstream policy may lead to or entrench childhood poverty is virtually ignored. For instance, the importance of maintaining funding for education, improving childcare or providing comprehensive income support during periods of economic austerity has not been consistently recognized. Basic services remain severely under-funded even though we know about the significance of adequate levels of provision for children. Apart from failing to prioritize interventions whose impact is well proven, specific policies for chil-

dren have generally been marginalized. They are often equated with marginal aspects of social policy, rather than seen as an essential element of combating chronic poverty” (UNDP, 2004: pg. 4).

“For most PRSPs, increased social sector expenditure is a hallmark feature and is in the main directed towards the health, education, and water and sanitation sectors. However, it is important to note that tight fiscal policies and debt relief programs frame most PRSPs, as the latter are often developed in compliance with conditional lending requirements. While fiscal policy restraint is prudent in respect of medium term affordability and sustainability purposes, it constrains the extent of social service expansion” (UNDP, 2003: pg. 6).

“Public expenditure management reforms are important in complementing effective PRSPs, as they ensure that the expenditure and revenue-raising choices that a government makes are both affordable and sustainable. Indirectly, public expenditure management and good governance reforms do benefit children as they ensure that resources are directed to high priority policies and interventions. These policies and interventions support child poverty reduction, provided that it is prioritized in economic and social policy choices, and that appropriate institutions are able to implement the intended interventions efficiently and effectively, directing resources to poor and marginalized groups of children” (UNDP, 2003: pg. 7: pg. 26).

Studying the ways in which I-PRSPs and PRSPs deal with social protection issues in countries where Save the Children UK works, Marcus and Wilkinson (2002) indicate that there is considerable variation as to the extent to which childhood poverty is considered an important issue, and the way it is conceived. For instance, “Albania’s is the only strategy to make an explicit link between broad economic or social trends and child well-being. Most others discuss children either as members of ‘vulnerable groups’, e.g., orphans or street children, and their situation is not explicitly connected with broader policies or trends. None of these strategies discuss child labor, other than in the most limited fashion. Policy for tackling



childhood poverty is based on supporting family incomes and access to health and education services, with, in some places, provision for orphans or other 'especially vulnerable children'. In most cases, there is insufficient detail to analyze the likely effectiveness of these policies. Nonetheless, it seems clear that few countries are prioritizing childhood poverty reduction, despite its important contribution to reducing both current and future poverty (Marcus and Wilkinson, 2002: pg. 48).

Another example of how PRSPs deal with child poverty is the review of PRSPs in Southern Africa commissioned by Save the Children Sweden. That review focused on child poverty and child rights, and the role of civil society participation in formulating and implementing national PRSPs. The study recommended that, along with economic growth, PRSPs should promote the development of healthcare, education, and other social services. The study also noted the importance of good governance, social protection, and the importance of special consideration to gender, the environment and HIV/Aids issues.

Overall, the reviews of the PRSPs indicate that the PRSP process needs to put more effort in highlighting issues around child poverty. The guidelines proposed by organizations like UNICEF, CHIP, Save the Children, GDI, and UNDP to help the PRSP reduce child poverty, are good to help the PRSP process recognize child poverty, incorporate the needs of poor children, and design poverty reduction strategies that help alleviate the deprivation of children living in poverty.

### Strategies to reduce Child Poverty

There are many initiatives and policy strategies at the disposal of governments and civil society organizations to help reduce child poverty. These can range from direct cash transfers that target individual children and families to public investment in social services that benefits entire communities. Below is an overview of some of the initiatives and policy strategies available to address child poverty. These particular ini-

tiatives and policy strategies were selected because the research found that they were commonly adopted by governments and civil society organizations.

#### Cash transfers

Social assistance payments, or cash transfers to low-income families with children is one of the several strategies of alleviating childhood poverty. Barrientos and DeJong (2004) explore if cash transfers make significant contributions to eradicating child poverty. In their study, they compare different types of cash transfer programs, and found that:

- targeted conditional programs are vertically efficient (there are insignificant leakages to the non-poor) but they score less well on horizontal poverty reduction efficiency (i.e. they do not reach all the poor)
- on the other hand, they also find that family allowances, are less vertically efficient, but achieve almost perfect horizontal efficiency.

Source: CHIP, 2004

Barrientos and DeJong found that, overall, families that benefit from cash transfer programs are free to use transfers to meet some of their basic needs (Barrientos and DeJong, 2004: pg. 11)

Several less developed countries are examining ways to increase cash transfers and to target them more effectively to the poorest families with children. "Tajikistan for example, is planning to revise its Cash Compensation Program to focus on the poorest 20 percent of families with children aged 6-15. (Similarly,) several of African PRSPs mention measures to support orphans financially" (CHIP, 2002: pg. 39). These policies recognize the importance for families with children to have monetary resources.

Moreover, according to UNICEF-IRC's "Social Monitor 2004", cash transfers have played an important role in supplementing family income in many countries of Eastern Europe. For example, "among the CEE/CIS countries Hungary provides all families with children with one of the most generous family allowances, irrespective of income. In Kazakhstan as of 2003 a childbirth benefit is

paid for all newborn children for a period of 15 months. In Romania, there was a marked increase in the levels of universal family allowances in the late 1990s, although, these only account for a small component of family income. In contrast, family allowances that were previously available on a universal basis in some countries are now means-tested. This is the case in Poland and in Serbia and Montenegro” (2004: pg. 11).

In Brazil, around 68 percent of households receive some kind of cash transfer from the government, which accounts on average for 30 percent of their incomes. However, the distribution of these social security benefits is unequal because it is highly concentrated on the most affluent households. Although, “assistance programs like Bolsa Escola are well focused on the most vulnerable population [42,000 children enrolled in the program], the budget devoted to these programs is still a minuscule share of total social spending”, as indicated by Siqueira, Nogueira, and O’Donoghue (2003; pg. 11).

According to Morley the “Bolsa Escola is a large national cash transfer program to poor families with children aged 6-15 conditioned on the children attending school. Begun in 2001, it grew out of a number of successful local programs and a small national program, the Guaranteed Minimum Income Program (PRGM) which had been running since 1998. It gives R\$15 (\$6) per month per child up to a maximum of three children per family or R\$45. The money is transferred from the national treasury to an account set up in the name of the mother. The mother is also given an electronic card with which she can withdraw the money at any branch of the Caixa Econômica Federal or at thousands of other local outlets. The Federal government uses a national poverty map and an education census to determine the number of potential beneficiaries in each municipality. A local committee chooses the beneficiary families. In 2001 R\$ 1.7 billion (\$680 million) was allocated to this program to cover 10.7 million children from 5.8 million families. By December 2001 8.2 million children were enrolled” (Morley, 2003: pg. 22).

In terms of school enrolment, a 1997 joint evaluation by UNICEF and the Institute for Applied Economic Research demonstrates that the dropout rate had been reduced from 10 to 0.4 percent while enrolment in higher education had increased. Concurrently, there has been a decrease in the employment rates of children aged 10 to 14 by 31.2 percent, reflected by a 36 percent decrease in the number of street children in Brasilia (Pólis, 2002).

Similar to the Brazilian Bolsa-Escola, the PROGRESA-Oportunidades program was created to reduce poverty in Mexico through specific policies regarding food, nutrition and health care policies. Since 1997 the program has reduced teenagers’ involvement in work by 12-20 percent, reduced the incidence of illness among 0-5 yr olds by 12 percent and reduced rates of stunting.

Belik and Grossi (2003) indicate that PROGRESA-Oportunidades is a second-generation program to reduce poverty because has changed how public resources were incorporated in the planning and implementing social protection policies.

- it transfers resources directly to the beneficiary public;
- the transfer is made directly to the female-householder;
- the transfer is conditional on beneficiary actions, concerning education (keeping children in school), health care (basic care for the whole family) and nutrition (classes in the community, public health assistance).

SOURCE: Belik and Grossi, 2003, pg. 12

Parker and Scott<sup>8</sup> (2001) point out that “according to World Bank authorities, the traditional poverty combat programs were not effective in Mexico due to public system corruption in resource transfers, misdirected focus resulting in wasted resources, and excess control of the beneficiary public.”

In reviewing a number of programs addressing child poverty in Mexico, South Af-

<sup>8</sup> cited on Belik and Grossi (2003: pg. 12)

rica and Chile, Barrientos and DeJong suggest that:

- developing countries ought to consider developing cash transfer programs within integrated childhood poverty eradication programs
- due attention be paid to the key role played by households in ensuring that transfer programs are effectively addressing child poverty. An implication of this is that poor households should be regarded less as clients and more as the main agents of change.

Source: CHIP, 2004

#### Other successful examples of income protection programs:

In **Hungary**, in the mid-1990s, without family allowances, child poverty would have been 85 percent higher, while in Poland it would have been a third higher.

Without **Kyrgyzstan's** social protection system, 24 percent more people would be living in extreme poverty. As poverty is concentrated among families with children, many of these would have been children.

In **Nicaragua**, the *Red de Proteccion Social* managed to stop food consumption declining in poor families during a coffee price shock that seriously undermined poor people's livelihoods. It has also increased school enrolment by 22 percent and attendance by 30 percent.

In **Bangladesh**, children participating in the *Food for Education* program (now reoriented to provide Cash for Education) have 20-30 percent higher enrolment rates and stay in school between six months and two years longer than non-participating children.

CHIP (2004b): pg. 2

#### Elimination of user fees

The problem with user fees is that the poorest and most vulnerable people may not be able to pay them, and not have access to basic services. In many countries where user fees were removed or have implemented exemption or waiver systems, public services became more accessible for the poor.

Unlike its regional neighbors, Toronto has a high proportion of children living in low-income families. Over 45,000 children are enrolled in licensed child care programs across the city; of these more than half are subsidized. Of the 24,216 budgeted subsidies, 77 percent are used by single-parent families. "The average child care cost of \$7,188 is well beyond the reach of this average family, and even the \$1,400 average user fee they must pay (\$5.36 per day) represents a significant strain on limited financial resources. Clearly, subsidized child care plays a major role in maintaining the employment and income security of parents. It is both a beneficial and cost-effective alternative to social assistance. After user fees are subtracted, the subsidy is approximately one half of the value of a social assistance benefit for a single family with one child" (Toronto, 2005)

#### Budget initiatives for children

As a political process, national budgets are financial embodiment of a government's policy annual goals and products of a multi-dimensional negotiation. According to Gore and Minujin (2003), prioritizing children's rights in public expenditure require political will and progressive financial commitment from the government, but not a separate budget for them. In general, "the rationale for undertaking budget initiatives for children is to: Analyze and influence the budgeting process so that budgets realize children's rights; influence the social content of economic and fiscal policy; engender social mobilization, consensus, inclusiveness and participation; and monitor public expenditure and governance" (Gore and Minujin, 2003: pg. 4).

Different efforts shows how budgeting can be implemented in different contexts:

- Given the desperate squeeze on resources faced by most countries in the 1990s, “the **20/20** principle recognized that additional resources needed for children would need to be found from restructuring existing spending rather than from new resources. The additional resources needed to ensure basic services for all – primary health care, primary education, reproductive health and family planning and the provision of safe water and sanitation for all – can be obtained if each country allocated 20 percent of its national public expenditure to these basic (services) and each donor country, in parallel, allocated 20 percent of its aid budget to the same priorities” (Jolly, 2005: pg. 3).
- PRSPs** can play an important role in integrating social and economic policies and representing them in the budget. Equally, budget initiatives can play an important role in PRSPs giving visibility to integrate gender and children’s concerns. The absence of human rights principles and weak budgeting can result in ineffectiveness anti-poverty strategies (Gore and Minujin, 2003).

Budgeting issues are critical in addressing child poverty. Allocating budget resources to child poverty programs would increase the government’s commitment to reducing child poverty.

**UNICEF briefly notes factors of success in budget initiatives, drawing upon the experience from Brazil, Ecuador, South Africa, and India:**

Budget analysis skills are key:

Technical expertise in budget analysis is essential to advocate for, negotiate, participate in and support informed decision-making on public expenditure issues. This implies developing analytical tools that are tailored to the country context. Without concurrently strengthening the technical capacity

of state actors, budget analysis remains an academic exercise.

Empowerment begins with quality of information:

Across countries, a common finding regarding budgets is that they are complex, unclear and difficult to access. Technical analysis needs to be clearly presented and strategically distributed to a wide and interested audience (for example, educators, media, parliamentarians, etc).

Transparency and participation are interdependent:

Effective participation requires not only access to information and the capacity to analyze it, but also opportunities to challenge and act upon it, i.e. to hold government accountable and to influence policy.

Realizing children’s rights requires rethinking institutional processes and policy-making:

Budgets need to be situated in the broader context of how policies are made and implemented. The question of integrating social policy in macroeconomic policy, instead of regarding it as an add-on to macroeconomic goals, is an area of study which has the potential to change the basis of policy decisions so that outcomes are more equitable. Socio-economic and political issues in fiscal policy, decentralization, legislative and institutional reform, etc, are all pertinent to the realization of children’s rights.

Effective advocacy requires understanding the politics of budgeting:

This implies dealing not only with the mechanics of budgeting, but understanding the interests of, and developing strategic alliances with, state actors, media, academia, etc.

Gore and Minujin, 2003: pg.18

Jamaica is an example of a country that prioritized social spending. Despite suffering negative macroeconomic shocks and instability during the 1980s and 1990s, it

endeavored maintained the level of spending on basic social services as a share of public expenditures. This helped achieve universal enrolment for children 6-12 years old towards the end of the 1980s, and 97 percent enrolment among the 12-14 age group by 1999, and “infant mortality remained constant at 24 per 1,000” (ICC, 2000: pg. 14).

### Holistic Approach

“The positive synergy between actions in different social dimensions, such as shelter, health or education, is very well documented” (UNICEF, 2002: pg. 13). Policy makers need to recognize and leverage the link that policies in different social dimensions have. Such a “holistic consideration of children’s issues allows the exploitation of synergies and complementarities in the basic elements that constitute strategies to reduce poverty, such as interventions on education, health, nutrition, and water and sanitation. It is very important to explicitly integrate all dimensions that poverty presents and all their interaction effects among the policies and programs that influence child poverty” (CHIP, 2002).

Additionally, “the provision of basic social services of good quality to all children is one of the most direct and least expensive ways of reducing poverty. Providing basic social services of good quality to all children is key to building their basic capabilities to live in dignity. Ensuring universal access to an **integrated** package of basic social services is one of the most efficient and cost effective contributions to poverty reduction” (Vandemoortele, 2000: pg. 23). An integrated comprehensive approach is what is needed. Focusing on one dimension of child poverty at the expense of another will result in suboptimal results.

According to Marcus and Wilkinson (2002: pg. 38), from a desk study of six full and seventeen interim PRSPs, Albania’s I-PRSPs was the only one to declare that data on children living in poverty were inadequate, and “states that the government will be undertaking a Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) on child health and nutrition, as well as compiling broader indicators nec-

essary for assessing progress in social development.”

“Integration of services is essential because of the interdependence of the many facets of poverty... Lack of safe water and sanitation increase the incidence of disease episodes exacerbate malnutrition, which in turn can compromise brain development and the capacity of learning... [Thus] sectoral approaches run the risk of failing to capitalise on these kinds of connections” (ICC, 2000; pg. 12).

Even though no consensus exists on the appropriate set of policy measures to tackle child poverty, Vandemoortele (2000) indicates the following areas for potential improvements in the impact of social programs:

- programs of early childhood care and development;
- female teachers, toilet facilities and elimination of gender stereotypes in educational materials to retain girls in schools;
- adequate budget allocations for essential drugs, spare parts for hand pumps, teaching materials and textbooks;
- procurement of generic drugs;
- more reliance on nurses and other medical staff than on physicians;
- elimination of school and health fees for basic services, and minimizing other out-of pocket costs for users (e.g. uniforms);
- automatic promotion in primary education, provided quality is maintained;
- use the mother tongue, especially in the early years;
- multi-grade teaching and multiple shifts in low-density areas; and
- accelerated learning programs for over-age pupils.

Source: Vandemoortele, 2000: pg. 10

Moreover, PRSPs are not very encouraging in respects to incorporating gender issues into a holistic approach either. A review by the World Bank’s Gender Division of 15 I-PRSPs and 3 PRSPs completed by early 2001 found that “less than half discussed gender issues in any detail in their



diagnosis of poverty. Even fewer integrated gender analysis into their strategy, resource allocation and monitoring and evaluation sections. Gender issues were, predictably, better integrated into the 'health, nutrition and population (the reproductive sector) and to some extent in education (a quasi-social sector)' (Kabeer, 2003: pg. 205).

### Macroeconomic Policies

Macroeconomic and fiscal policies have a great impact on child poverty. The policies linked with globalization – free trade, privatization, increase in debt burden – have impacted children's lives and prospects. "The actual evidence linking global economic trends and policies and child well-being is still quite scarce. This is largely because of the different levels of causality involved in child poverty and the lack of fit in times scales between macro and local level change" (CCF, 2003: pg. 17).

Reducing child poverty requires direct interventions by both international organizations and national governments. "Governments must be responsible for policy making, and fully accountable within their societies for the outcomes. It must be made absolutely clear that it is not the role of the IMF and World Bank to prescribe government policies on issues such as trade liberalization, financial sector liberalization, labor market reform, privatization, agriculture sector reform, and charges for health care and education. The aim of full ownership of PRSPs by the countries concerned needs to become a reality" (WDM, 2002: pg. 5).

The PRSPs, as mentioned above, provide an opportunity to less developed countries to define macroeconomic goals and policies that addresses domestic poverty. PRSPs need to take into account that "the macroeconomic reforms designed by the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) (call for) non-inflationary budgetary policies and monetary restraint", which reduce social services and may not be in-line with what is best for reducing poverty in a country (Schneider, 2003). For example, cuts in education, health care, and other social services may impact children in a way that may propagate the poverty cycle.

In order to design macroeconomic strategies in such a way so that they contribute to strengthening of human rights in general and in particular the rights of the child, Heidel calls for a Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA) which investigates the impacts of liberalization, deregulation and privatization, lays open potential trade-offs and places more importance on critical sectors (Heidel, 2004). "The PSIA must pick up on civil society knowledge and be shaped by the experiences of marginalized and socially excluded groups. Since children and young people make up large parts of these groups their experiences must shape PSIA and particular importance should be placed upon the connection between poverty and the access to the rights of (children). The PSIA must include a special section on the impacts of macroeconomic strategies and economic measures on the rights of the child. Only on the basis of a coherent PSIA can criteria for a 'Pro-Poor Growth'<sup>9</sup> be extracted" (Heidel, 2004: pg. 50).

### Focusing policies on children

Although some organizations and governments often defend narrowly targeted programs in pursuit of efficiency, budget and flexibility, those PRSPs that aim to ensure basic social services should guarantee universal access. Vandemoortele indicates that "the relative advantages of targeting depend on the type of goods and services. The merits of a narrowly targeted fertiliser subsidy or micro-credit scheme, for instance, are very different from those of targeted vouchers for primary education. Generalisations about targeting, therefore, are of little use" (Vandemoortele, 2000; pg. 11)

Narrow targeting has important hidden costs, five of which deserve to be highlighted:

<sup>9</sup> Heidel indicates that a 'Pro-Poor Growth' concept is central, despite the lack of an internationally accepted definition. He says "the UNDP, at least, has formulated essential elements for 'Pro-Poor Growth', which include the sufficient allocation of capital to marginalized population groups, programs for rural development including land reform, policies to raise agricultural productivity and programs aimed at reducing income polarization" (Heidel, 2004: pg. 23).



- costs of mis-targeting, due to the difficulty in identifying the poor and/or vulnerable groups;
- costs of failing to reach the poorest, as the non-poor seldom accept to be by-passed by special subsidies;
- administrative costs of narrow targeting, which are at least twice as high as for untargeted programmes. They also create opportunities for mismanagement so that extra outlays for oversight and control add to the costs;
- out-of-pocket costs: narrow targeting frequently requires beneficiaries to document their eligibility, which involves expenses such as bus fares and other costs. They can easily exclude the poorest — who already resent the social stigma associated with means testing and are less informed about special programmes;
- cost of non-sustainability: once the non-poor cease to have a stake in narrowly targeted programmes, the political commitment to sustain their scope and quality is at risk. The voice of the poor is usually too weak to maintain strong support. Benefits are often allowed to erode over time by not adjusting their nominal value for inflation.

SOURCE: Vandemoortele, 2000; pg. 11-12

Regarding basic social services, the human rights approach dictates that the principle of universality takes priority over that of selectivity. Universal access “will create a social shock-absorber in times of crisis, which will help sustain the globalisation process and make it more inclusive. Basic social services are key to trigger the virtuous circle of social and economic development. Access to these services will equip and empower the poor to embrace change and make globalisation work for everyone, thereby improving the equity of market outcomes. The notion of participation is central to the human rights approach to development: the poor become engaged subjects of development, rather than being passive objects; they are strategic partners, rather than target groups. Universal access to basic social services will build the solid foundation for

meaningful participation” (Vandemoortele, 2000: pg. 23).

For instance, Cuba has made child health and education a priority. Since 1960, the government has provided supplementary nutrition for pregnant women and young children. “Doctors are required to serve in rural health services to make basic health services available to all. The under-five mortality rate has fallen from 54 per 1,000 in 1960 to 8 in 1998. The Early Education Childhood Care for survival, Growth and Development (ECCSGD) covers 99 percent of the population between 0 and 6 years old, and primary school attendance is also 99 percent.” (ICC, 2000: pg. 13)

### Advocacy and Mobilization

A number of civil society organizations have revealed that there has been a lack of consultation on the core economic conditions, and little opportunity to examine alternatives poverty reduction strategies. A review of four PRSPs and twelve interim papers, undertaken by WDM (2002), shows the degree to which the IMF has continued to exercise the dominant influence over macroeconomic policies in developing countries. This at the time when “the World Bank and other advocates of (structural) adjustment policies have increasingly acknowledged that many of these (structural) adjustment measures have generated losses among the poor. In fact, it concerns the connection between (structural) adjustment programs and growing poverty and inequality” (SAPRI 2002: pg. 185).

Many civil society organizations (CSOs) are now stepping up their advocacy for alternative development and anti-poverty strategies. They reject the IMF and WB’s policy conditions because they claim that there is nothing intrinsic to the policies assessed that will eventually work their magic in the market and reduce poverty and inequality (SAPRI 2002). For instance, Save the Children argues that it is critical for child advocacy groups at international, regional and local level to become stronger advocates and participants in PRSP processes, so as to ensure that alternative anti-poverty strategies that focus on children’s rights are prioritized and appropriately resourced in the

development planning and resource allocation processes.

Southern Africa's PRSP report (Save the Children Sweden, 2003) proposes a number of recommendations to child advocacy organizations and child rights actors:

- to build local capacity on economic and development literacy to raise awareness and participation, particularly child participation, in PRSP processes;
- to undertake research and analysis on the implementation, monitoring and review of PRSP processes;
- to increase advocacy efforts, and their impact, regarding the impor-

tance of PRSP processes to reducing child poverty and enhancing child rights in the region;

- the bilateral and multilateral cooperation must contribute to the empowerment of children and young people and their organizations so that they are in a position to participate relevantly in the PRSP process.

**Source:** Save the Children, 2003

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Over one billion children suffer from severe deprivation and over 600 million suffer from absolute deprivation (Gordon, *et al*, 2003). These findings indicate that children are growing up without the resources or services to develop into healthy, productive, and free adults who are able to realize their full potential in life.

Child poverty is a violation of children's rights and it also leads to adult poverty. In order to realize children's rights and to tackle poverty, poverty reduction strategies cannot ignore the special needs of children.

The following points are some steps that can be taken to ensure that child poverty is a main consideration of poverty reduction strategies:

- **Child poverty must be recognized** as a unique phenomenon that requires direct intervention. Indirect solutions have failed to address the special needs of children.
- Continue developing anti-poverty policies that **link Human Rights to poverty issues**. UNICEF's human rights-based approach discussed in section 1 is a powerful strategy to highlight the moral aspect of anti-poverty programs, the legal obligation, and the multi-dimensional nature of poverty. A human rights-based approach to poverty, as will be further discussed in the appendix, highlights the importance of a comprehensive, multi-dimensional, and long-term strategy to combating poverty.
- **Incorporation of Human Rights principles in PRSPs**. As just mentioned, a human rights based approach to poverty reduction is an effective way of identifying the economic and social rights of the poor. PRSPs can adopt human rights principles as the benchmark from which the deprivation of people can be measured. In particular, the rights of traditionally marginalized groups like children.
- **Address the link between child poverty, conflict, health issues, and natural disaster situations**. HIV/AIDS is having disastrous impact on children all over the world. The pandemic is causing millions of children to be deprived of basic needs. Similarly, children in conflict and disaster situations are vulnerable to suffering and deprivation. Accounting for these vulnerabilities would ensure that they are not neglected
- **Reduce inequality levels** to help improve universal access to basic services and goods.
- Analyze the link between **macroeconomic and fiscal policies and children**. As mentioned in the paper, macroeconomic policies, such as neo-classical structural adjustments, may have austere effects on children. Better understanding of the relationship between neo-classical macroeconomic policies and child poverty, can help develop anti-poverty strategies that can directly address child poverty.
- **Recognize the importance of Pro-Poor Growth policies to reducing child poverty**. As mentioned above, an essential element of Pro-Poor Growth is the "sufficient allocation of capital to marginalized population groups (Heidel, 2004: pg. 23). Children are a marginalized, under-analyzed, under-represented, and often over-looked group that requires the explicit attention of government policies.
- **Increase the efforts to measure child poverty**. The Bristol study and the Young Lives' Project, presented above, need to be replicated and expanded in order to get a better picture of the needs of children living in poverty. Moreover, such studies taken at the national and regional level can serve as invaluable inputs in designing local poverty reduction strategies. They can point to the areas in which children are most in need of.

- **Adoption of a participatory approach** in designing poverty reduction strategies. The PRSP initiative was intended to incorporate the voices of the different stakeholders of society. Children are, and should be considered, major stakeholders. Children living in poverty are the best suited to provide direction as to their needs. Children must be given a voice.
- **Governments must take ownership of their poverty reduction strategies.** The intention of the PRSPs is to give less developed countries the power over their own destinies. To that end, international organizations – IFIs & donors – should be included in discussions about PRSPs, but they should be on equal footing as the other stakeholders – government, civil society organizations, the private sector, the poor, ect.
- Governments and donors must **adopt the reduction of child poverty as an explicit government strategy.** Countries need to recognize child poverty as a problem and adopt explicit policies to address it.
- **Improve coordination of anti-poverty programs.** Targeting recognizes the importance of children's needs. Coordination of anti-poverty programs can help leverage synergies and increase the effectiveness of anti-poverty projects.
- **Additional research efforts** that analyze:
  - the implication that national anti-poverty policies have on children
  - the impact of child poverty on girls. As mentioned above, there is limited research that analyzes the relationship between child poverty and girls
  - the impact of pro-poor policies to reduce child poverty
  - the relationship between anti-poverty policies that account for gender and those that account for child poverty
  - the policies that seem to be effective in reducing childhood poverty

- multi-dimensional policies and implementation strategies to address child poverty

These are only a few policy recommendations to help ameliorate the pandemic of child poverty. The first step of dealing with child poverty is recognizing that it is violation of children's rights. Then to acknowledge that it is a problem that is threatening millions of children, and the future of millions of adults. Such acceptance will help governments and the international community adopt policies that will help create a world in which the promises and commitments made to children in the CRC are realized.

## ANNEX I - DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO POVERTY

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While poverty reduction is the key objective of anti-poverty initiatives, there is no uniform approach for defining, identifying or measuring poverty, nor is there a consensus on what “poverty reduction” really means. For example, some organizations hold that the goal of Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) should be to increase the monetary income of individuals; others argue that PRSs should aim to increase an individual’s access to work, education, health, transportation, and other basic services. This section will present a panoramic overview of poverty concepts and approaches to defining, identifying, and measuring poverty.

The definition of poverty plays a significant role in formulating anti-poverty strategies. Before conceptualizing a poverty reduction project, a project team must know exactly how poverty is being measured, how to identify the target population, how they plan to reduce poverty, and what indicators will measure the project’s success. Different poverty approaches have unique definitions of poverty and call for specific poverty indicators. Poverty indicators serve important role in designing anti-poverty strategies. According to T.N. Srinivasan (UNDP, 2004b) poverty indicators have three important purposes: First, they serve as a yardstick to illustrate the extent of poverty and profile the poor. Second, poverty indicators are useful to evaluate the different factors of poverty and put together policy interventions. Lastly, poverty indicators can be used to help mobilize international support for anti-poverty initiatives. Thus the poverty approach, which determines how poverty is defined and which indicators are used in a PRS, has a significant impact on anti-poverty projects.

International organizations agree that poverty is a multi-faceted phenomenon – economic, political, social, and so on – but there is no consensus as to how poverty should be measured and which indicators should be used to determine the success of anti-poverty strategies. In 2002, at the UN Millennium Summit in New York, 149 coun-

tries committed to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which included the halving of poverty by 2015. However, unlike some of the other MDGs with clear success indicators (like universal primary education, or reduced child mortality, and combating HIV/AIDS), the MDG #1, which deals with poverty reduction, purposely did not provide any explicit way of identifying poverty or measuring whether it is being reduced. The lack of clear poverty indicators is indicative of the on-going debate as to the exact definition of poverty, and points to the urgent need for a clarification of how poverty is defined and what indicators should be used to measure the success of anti-poverty projects.

### Toward a Multidimensional Approach

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As mentioned above, this section provides a broad view of different poverty measurements and methodologies. The first distinction between the various approaches is whether they are uni-dimensional or multi-dimensional. The monetary approach, which will be described in detailed below, is a uni-dimensional approach and is the most used approach among international development organizations, such as the World Bank (Boltvinik, 1998). It uses income level to identify and measure poverty. Money, either represented by an individual’s income or consumption levels, serves as the universal yardstick assessing poverty. “This is achieved by national accounting systems at the cost of measuring only those objects which the economic process measures in terms of value: commodities or bought-use values (i.e., use values acquired through the market)” (Boltvinik, 1998: p. 5). As a consequence, income level is the only indicator used by the monetary approach to assess poverty.

Multi-dimensional approaches, such as the basic needs, capability and human rights



approaches, use a broad set of poverty indicators to identify and measure poverty. This type of approach holds that monetary measures, while highly correlated with deprivation and unfulfilled needs, is not able to effectively identify the poor or guide PRSs. Instead, multi-dimensional approaches create a list of rights, needs, or capabilities that is used to ascertain whether an individual is poor and what a PRS needs to address in order to reduce poverty. Thus, instead of calling for policies that may concentrate on increasing individuals' income or consumption level, the objective of multi-dimensional approaches is to ensure that the basic needs and rights of the poor are met – such as access to public services, infrastructure, shelter, food, and so on.

### Absolute and Relative Poverty

Another major concept in the poverty dialogue is the distinction between absolute and relative poverty.

- *Absolute Poverty* measures the number of people living below a certain income threshold (poverty line) or the number of households unable to afford certain basic goods and services, such as food, shelter, water, sanitation, or health. Needs are considered to be fixed at a level which provides for subsistence (Wratten, 1995).
- *Relative Poverty* measures the extent to which a household cannot reach a “certain” standard of living common to a country in particular. It is an indicator that measures whether an individual or household's income is low *relative* to other sectors of society; it does not imply that the basic needs are not being met. Relative poverty measures are also used as indicators of social inequality (Boltvinik, 1998).

In terms of flexibility and applicability, the relative poverty allows for adjustments in the poverty line and in the minimum resources needed to live in a society. It reflects the view that poverty imposes with-

drawal or exclusion from active membership of society (Wratten, 1995: p. 14). Absolute poverty, on the other hand, does not describe the extent of income inequality within a society nor the fact that needs are socially determined and that they change over time. Consequently, the absolute definition has to be adjusted periodically to take into account technological and social developments; i.e., improved methods of sanitation or child primary health care.

Advocates of the relative definition argue that absolute poverty ignores or underestimates certain relative forms of social needs, and establish poverty lines that may or may not be able to effectively identify and measure poverty. In essence, the polemic is whether the poverty threshold is arbitrarily defined by governments, international organizations or researcher, or whether it has a social objective existence.

### Monetary Approach

The monetary approach to identifying and measuring poverty is the most commonly used methodology by international development agencies. It defines poverty as the shortfall in income from a poverty line. The approach first identifies a basket of goods and services that is defined to be the minimum requirements for individuals or households to live a decent and independent life. The approach then prices out the different components of basket at market price, “which requires identification of the relevant market and the imputation of monetary values for those items that are not valued through the market (such as subsistence production and, in principle, public goods)” (Laderchi, Saith, and Steward, 2003: p. 6). Lastly, the monetary approach then sets a poverty line from which the poor are identified. The poverty line, in essence, states that anyone with income or consumption levels below the identified poverty line is living in poverty. The poverty line is the only indicator used by the monetary approach to identify and measure poverty. Non-income indicators - such as health, education, and citizenship rights - are not considered by the monetary approach when identifying or measuring poverty.

There are two main arguments supporting the use of the monetary approach to poverty. First, there is the minimum rights argument, which states there is a certain basic income that is regarded as essential for individuals or households to have the freedom to live a decent and independent life. “Secondly, the use of a monetary indicator is often invoked not because monetary resources measure utility, but because it is assumed it can appropriately proxy other aspects of welfare and poverty” (Laderchi, Saith, and Steward, 2003: p. 7).

The most widely used monetary approach is the \$1-a-day international poverty line. It was established by international finance organizations by analyzing the 1985 poverty lines of the 33 countries, which were then converted to US dollars using the PPP exchange rate available for each currency at that time. The analysis found that the poverty lines clustered around \$1-a-day in constant 1985 PPP dollars (UNDP, 2004b). In 1990 the World Bank (WB) released a study that provided global poverty counts based on the \$1-a-day (1985 PPP). The WB’s study was instrumental in establishing the \$1-a-day as the absolute international minimum standard of living below which individuals cannot meet their basic needs.

Nanak Kakwani, of the UNDP’s International Poverty Center, released a research study that questioned the validity and utility of the \$1-a-day poverty line. He argued that even though each country has a normative poverty threshold, specific to each country’s minimum living standard to which everyone in that society should be entitled to, a common international poverty line plays an important role in monitoring poverty levels. Therefore, an international poverty line does have utility. At the same time he argued that \$1-a-day was an “eye-balled” statistical solution which had little relevance to a person being able to meet the basic needs to live a decent and independent life. Moreover, Kakwani argues that the \$1-a-day poverty line does not reflect changes in inflation rates, in the goods bundles used to create the 1985 poverty lines, or in the PPP exchange rates. Furthermore, the \$1-a-day analysis also included the poverty lines of Developed Countries like Australia and the

United States, which skewed the results of the poverty analysis. Kakwani concludes that the \$1-a-day international poverty line is not very valid or effective at measuring poverty.

To adjust for these short falls in the \$1-a-day poverty line, Nanak used the national poverty lines of 19 low-income countries, to come up with an updated poverty line of \$1.50-a-day. Nanak went on to calculate a second international poverty line based on caloric intake. The result was a \$1.22-a-day poverty line. Under the adjusted poverty lines the number of poor roughly went from 1,098.4 million people under the \$1-a-day, to 1,384.9 million using the caloric \$1.22-a-day poverty line, to 1,885.0 million using the late 1990s poverty line analysis of \$1.50-a-day (UNDP, 2004b). Such increase in the number of poor reduces the success rating of the international finance organizations at reducing poverty around the world.

Besides the lack of adjusting to new conditions, there are other criticisms to monetary approach to poverty. Critics state that monetary approach concentrates too much on individuals, and not on social solutions. Poverty lines, in general, pay more attention to the private resources of individuals and/or households, than to public goods and social income (i.e. schools, clinics, the environment...). Policy recommendations based on the monetary approach thus propose biased solutions that focus on generating private income for individuals and not on generating public goods that would benefit society as a whole (Laderchi, Saith, and Steward, 2003).

Another major criticism is that monetary poverty lines, especially international poverty lines, are arbitrarily based by governments or international organizations. Since there is no economic theory that differentiates the poor from the non-poor, poverty lines are normatively set. Poverty is socially and locally defined, and may be politically influenced. What one country defines as their poverty line, may greatly defer from another country’s poverty line. Thus, it is improbable that there could be one international poverty line that accurately reflects all countries’ definition of poverty.

## Basic Needs Approach

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The “unsatisfied” basic needs approach is a multidimensional poverty measurement that regards poverty as the inability to satisfy a socially defined set of needs that allow an individual to be able to actively participate in society. Individuals who are unable to satisfy these needs are considered poor. There are two different definitions of needs: first, there are those needs whose satisfaction depend primarily on economic conditions and are called material or structural determined; secondly, there are those needs that depend primarily on non-economic conditions and are called nonmaterial or agent-determined.

Another aspect the basic needs approach is that human needs change throughout life. Demographic variables – such as gender, age, and disabilities – impact the basic needs of individuals. Both the changing relation between resources and needs through the life cycle may cause individuals and households to fall, temporarily or permanently, into poverty.

An essential issue with the basic needs approach is what elements to consider as basic needs. There is general agreement that the list of basic needs must be socially defined and should be sufficiently flexible to adjust to different country and culture specific contexts. A list of generally proposed basic needs includes such things as the need for water, food, shelter; as well public service needs like sanitation, health, education, security and transport.

There are two types of methods to measure poverty with the basic needs approach:

- *Direct approach* attempts to verify the factual satisfaction of needs comparing need by need with a normative threshold. In this situation unsatisfied basic needs can be observed directly. Besides the opinion of the observer, certain threshold or standard to compare the results is required. For instance, the caloric intake of a child can be measured against a normative quantity to ascertain whether the

child’s nutritional basic need is being satisfied.

- The *Indirect approach* measures the resources (not only income but, in a more general sense, entitlements and public goods) that a household commands, and compares the magnitude and composition of these resources with the resources required to meet their basic needs. In essence, what this approach identifies the *potential* to satisfy human needs.

## Capability Approach

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Unlike the one-dimensional monetary approach and similar to the basic needs approach, the capability approach to poverty is a multi-dimensional methodology, championed by Amartya Sen, that judges an individual’s capabilities and freedom “to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value” (Sen, 1999: p.87). It acknowledges the linkages between low-income and poverty, but it sees poverty as the deprivation of basic capabilities, not as lowness of income, and therefore looks at a broad set of factors that influence an individual’s capability and freedom to live a decent life; where basic capabilities are “the ability to satisfy certain crucially important functionings up to certain minimally adequate levels” (Sen, 1999: p. 41).

There are three major arguments in favor of the capability approach to poverty:

- The approach concentrates on deprivations that are *intrinsically* important to identifying poverty (unlike low income, which is only *instrumentally* significant)
- There are influences on capability deprivation – and thus on real poverty – *other* than low income (income is not the only instrument in generating capabilities)
- The approach recognizes that the impact of income on capabilities is contingent and conditional; in other words that different individuals, communities and countries may need different levels of resources to

achieve the same capabilities (Sen, 1999: p. 87-88).

These three aspects point to the multi-dimensional and achievement oriented nature of the capability approach.

As can be surmised from arguments in favor of the capability approach, it emphasizes non-monetary indicators for evaluating an individual's well-being or deprivation. It holds that monetary indicators are, at best, indirect measures of the means available to individuals to enhance their capabilities to realize human potential and escape deprivation, rather than demonstrating actual outcomes (Laderchi, Saith, and Steward, 2003). Instead, the capability approach argues that poverty measures should concentrate on assessing the realization of an individual's basic capabilities.

Sen does not provide a list of basic capabilities, but there have been attempts at creating an objective and non-culturally bias list. According to Laderchi, Saith, and Steward (2003), the most influential list of basic capabilities was put together by M. Nussbaum (2000). Her list tries to reach an "overlapping consensus" of what it means to be a human being and what capabilities individuals need to live a decent and independent life. Her list includes:

- Life: normal length of life
- Health: good health, adequate nutrition and shelter
- Bodily integrity: movement; Choice in reproduction
- Senses: imagination and thought, informed by education
- Emotions
- Practical reason critical reflection and planning life
- Affiliation social interaction protection against discrimination
- Other species respect for and living with other species
- Play
- Control over ones environment, politically (choice) and materially (property)

Source: (Nussbaum, 2000)<sup>10</sup>

Nussbaum's basic capabilities list can be used as indicators to identify the level of poverty and the needs of the poor, to design a PRS that will address the exact needs of the poor, and to establish success criteria by which anti-poverty strategies can be evaluated.

Another main difference between the monetary approach and the capability approach is that it does not support the use of a poverty line to identify the poor. It holds that because the link between low income and low capability varies between families, communities, and countries, efforts to identify the poor must take into consideration the contextual situation of an individual or household – gender, age, size of household, public services available in the community, illness or disabilities (Sen, 1999; Laderchi, Saith, and Steward, 2003). Depending on their condition, individuals may require different levels of resources to be capable realize the same outcomes.

Additionally, poverty lines do not consider the role of externalities and public goods and services in helping individuals achieve the capability of living a decent and independent life. The capability approach, on the other hand, looks at the contextual situation of individuals, at the public goods and services available to them, and at a broad set of variables that may influence the realization of their basic capabilities.

A major argument against the capability approach is the difficulty of converting a set of basic capabilities into a set of measurable indicators. "The crucial issue is, of course, that capabilities represent asset of potential outcomes and as such are problematic to identify empirically" (Laderchi, Saith, and Steward, 2003: p. 18). Efforts must be taken to identify replicable methods that can measure achieved capabilities. A participatory evaluation effort, which includes the poor, can be the most effective tactic to assess the effectiveness of anti-poverty strategies at providing individuals with the basic capabilities to escape poverty.

## Poverty and Human Rights

<sup>10</sup> as presented in Laderchi, Saith, and Steward, 2003

The human rights-based approach to poverty endeavors to integrate human rights concepts and language into the poverty reduction dialogue. The approach holds that the objectives and values of anti-poverty strategies should be guided by the international human rights laws (OHCHR, 2002). Because international human rights laws have been universally recognized and are reinforced by legal obligations, the human rights-based approach provides a compelling and explicit normative “framework for the formulation of national and international policies, including” anti-poverty programs (OHCHR, 2002: p. 1).

The human rights-based poverty approach is essentially about empowering the poor. The concept of Rights gives the poor the power to claim from their governments the anti-poverty policies that will improve their lives. “Poverty reduction then becomes more than charity, more than a moral obligation – it becomes a legal obligation” (OHCHR, 2002: p. 1).

To contribute to the empowerment of the poor, the human rights-based approach includes several salient features: accountability, the principles of non-discrimination and equality, and the principle of participatory decision-making processes. These features ensure that anti-poverty strategies are more than window-dressing, that marginalized groups are not excluded, and that the poor are included in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction strategies.

The human rights-based approach claims to be a holistic approach to reducing poverty. It highlights that while poverty reduction may seem to deal with economic, social and cultural rights, it is also very important to ensure the civil and political rights of the poor. By ensuring the latter, the poor will be more empowered to demand that their government adopt anti-poverty strategies that will help them live a decent and independent life.

As for identifying the poor, like the capability approach mentions above, the human rights-based approach holds that “a poor person is one who is deprived of basic capabilities – such as the capability to be

free from hunger, to live in good health, to be literate, and so on” (OHCHR, 2002: p. 6). These unsatisfied capabilities map to unfulfilled human rights – such as the rights to food, health, education and so on – which governments have the legal responsibilities to meet. The list of basic capabilities may differ from one country to another, but based on empirical observation, OHCHR developed a common set of capabilities that are basic to most countries:

- Being adequately nourished
- Avoiding preventable morbidity and premature mortality
- Being adequately sheltered
- Having basic education
- Being able to appear in public without shame
- Being able to earn a livelihood
- Taking part in the life of a community

This list resembles Nussbaum’s list of basic capabilities. And like Nussbaum’s list, this list can be used to identify the poor, to learn more of their exact needs, and to evaluate the success of poverty reduction strategies.

The human rights approach recognizes that governments, especially in Less Developed Countries (LDCs), have limited resources, and it allows for the progressive, staged, realization of a poverty reduction strategy. However, it does stress that governments must commit to a poverty reduction strategy that explicitly sets out to progressively meet the human rights entitle to the poor.

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## Poverty and Women

Men and women experience poverty differently. According to the statements of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, “the gap between women and men caught in the cycle of poverty has continued to widen in the past decade, a phenomenon commonly referred to as ‘the feminization of poverty’” (Division for the Advancement of Women, DAW-UN, 2000)



Households have been restructured in the last years as consequence of demographic and socio-economic changes. In both developed and developing countries, there has been an increase in the number of female-headed households. Consequently, women assume a disproportionate share of the responsibilities without improving their subordinate position within the household.

Many studies have shown that in developing countries rural women have been forced to undertake multiple piece-rate jobs, domestic services, and other informal sector activities. This means longer hours for women, very poor working conditions with no worker rights and extremely low pay, without even the security of being able to produce food for household consumption. In the developed world, women have reductions in social services, increasing unemployment, and decreased worker benefits. Overall, the world has witnessed an increase in women's responsibilities in their homes and communities, and a decrease in their access to resources.

“For poor women exposed to domestic, community or state-sponsored violence – psychological and emotional as well as physical and sexual – escape from poverty is especially difficult. Women and girls are most at risk of persistent poverty in contexts where gender-based discrimination is chronic, severe, and overlapping with other forms of marginalization such as age, marital status or ethnicity. The cycle of maternal and child malnutrition, morbidity and mortality is one of the most significant means through which poverty persists over generations: a vicious cycle of low investment in women and low investment in girls. Gender discrimination in access to health, nutrition, education and security exacerbates this process further.” (CPRC, 2004; pg. 21).

Social isolation is a central experience of women living in poverty. Isolation is a consequence of material scarcity, discrimination, gender roles, lack of access to health and other social services, disabilities and impairments, and immigration. These factors cause women stress, depression, and low self-esteem that result in the lack of ability, desire, and resources to leave their homes.

Moreover, the provision of credit, especially micro-credit, has become a very popular and successful poverty reduction strategy for women. Some 10 million women around the world are reached by systems of small loans.

Poverty reduction strategies targeting women have greater impact than just helping women escape poverty. Households headed by women appear to do better at distributing resources within the household. Even though male-headed households earn more income, there is evidence that show that female-led households are better off in other respects, besides income, because of women's apparent greater emphasis on welfare-enhancing consumption practices (Gonzalez de la Roca and Grinspun, 2001).

UNICEF aims to reduce discrimination that women and girls experience living in poverty. “UNICEF is committed to leveling the playing field for girls and women by ensuring that all children have equal opportunity to develop their talents... By recognizing and addressing discrimination against girls and women, success in the fight against all forms of discrimination -- class, race, ethnicity and age -- will become more likely, and more lasting” (2005).

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## Poverty and Exclusion

Social exclusion has a strong connection with poverty. Some use the term “social exclusion” as a fashionable synonym of income poverty; many others prefer to state it as a broader term beyond the monetary approach to measure poverty, including polarization, differentiation, and inequality. For instance, the UNDP conceptualized social exclusion “as lack of recognition of basic rights, or where the recognition exists, lack of access to political and legal systems necessary to make those rights a reality”; and “in Scandinavia the socially excluded are taken to be the ‘poorest of the poor’”. (Burchardt, Le Grand, and Piachaud, 2002: p 3)

Empirical approaches to operationalize the concept of social inclusion – according to a specific or a general conception of it – are built on the tradition of the monetary ap-

proach of measuring poverty. However, social exclusion has added some new highlights to the concept of poverty. It has given emphasis to agency and process. In this regard, Room (1995)<sup>11</sup> develops these interrelations and points out three steps in the movement of income poverty to social inclusion:

- from income or expenditures to multidimensional disadvantage;
- from static to dynamic analysis;
- from resources at the individual or household level to local community.

Another key topic that divides the social exclusion debate is the issue of who is doing the exclusion. According to Burchardt, Le Grand, and Piachaud (2002), exclusion is a result of a lack of agency: it is the outcome of the system (unintended or at least beyond the control of any individual or organization), while the socially excluded lack the opportunity to remedy their situation. This position supposes that the exercise of agency by some, acting to protect their own interests, excludes others. On the other hand, some indicate that all notions of social inclusion have to contend with the possibility of voluntary or self-exclusion.

Poverty is not a contained condition. It inevitably spills over from one country to another. Factors that underpin that dynamic have diverse origin: economic, social, environmental or political. One of the main mandates of the UNDP in supporting the development of anti-poverty strategies is to ensure that agency is defined as the “widening of choices”. Briefly, poverty eradication is fundamentally about extending equality in opportunities and choices. Those actions are primarily the responsibility of governments, but also entail consultation and co-operation with civil society at large, and the poor in particular.

Although much is known in the field of equity and poverty reduction, there is more that is not known. In particular, virtually nothing seems to be known in the developing world about the persistent extreme inequality, the reproduction of these inequalities in spite of growth, and the global income inequalities between developed and developing countries. Addressing squarely the issue of inequality, and linking inequality and poverty reduction to growth, should be at the top of the agenda for the stabilization of economic recoveries and for the consolidation of democratic gains (Sadoulet; De Janvry 1996).

## Poverty and Equality

Economic and social equality is an ethical concept grounded in the principle of distributive justice. It is to be a basic factor to fight against poverty which limits human freedom and deprives a person of dignity. Equal living conditions and access to the same opportunities reflects a concern to reduce unequal opportunities with membership in less privileged social groups, such as the poor; disenfranchised racial, ethnic or religious groups; women; and rural residents. An equity framework systematically focuses attention on socially disadvantaged, marginalized, or disenfranchised groups within and between countries, including but not limited to the poor (Braveman, Tarimo, and Creese, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> cited on Burchardt, Le Grand, and Piachaud, 2002: page 5)

## ANNEX II - COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

In November 2000, 180 nations took the responsibility of safeguarding the wellbeing of children throughout the world at the UN Millennium Summit. They agreed on a set of Millennium Development Goals that would, among other things, promote greater cooperation between nations with different levels of resources. Five of the eight goals have direct implications for children. And one of the main goals emerging from the Summit is to reduce by half the number of people who live in poverty by the year 2015.

Other important demonstration of international solidarity and commitment to reduce child poverty was the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children in May 2002. Countries met in New York to decide what should be done to improve the lives of children. The main result of that meeting was a document called "*A World Fit for Children*". This document details the promises made by governments to improve the lives of children from 2002 to 2012.

*"We know that the world has fallen short of achieving most of the goals of the World Summit for Children (1990), not because they were too ambitious or unaffordable ...we have fallen short largely because the needed investments for children were not made. With limited supports, even the poorest countries can afford to underwrite basic social services."*

Kofi A. Annan "*We the Children: Meeting the Promises of the World Summit for Children*", 2001.

Despite the commitments by the international community to offer children a better life, only a few countries can be considered as champions of child-rights through international programs against child poverty. There are several countries, however, that have dedicated resources to reducing child poverty nationally and internationally. For brevity's sake, this annex will discuss two case studies: the United Kingdom and Canada.

These two countries are examples of countries that have adopted explicit policies to reduce child poverty.

### Canada

Canada played a key role in developing the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the 1990 World Summit for Children, a meeting which the Prime Minister of Canada co-chaired. Since then, Canada has worked intensely on child protection, has helped broker the "Optional Protocol" to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, as well as the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Canada also actively participated in the development of the ILO's Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor. Through the National Children's Agenda and programs such as the Aboriginal Head Start Initiative, Canada has made a renewed commitment to reducing child poverty domestically, and to tackling such child-protection issues as ethnic discrimination in Canada.

Through the **Canada International Development Agency (CIDA)**, the government of Canada has supported children in need of special protection measures. For example, CIDA provides core financial support to UNICEF, which carries out programming in child protection. Canada's support to the ILO, funded jointly through CIDA and the Labor Program of Human Resources Development Canada, is spent entirely on programs aimed at combating the worst forms of child labor. Much of the international humanitarian assistance that CIDA provides to agencies, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Program, benefits children affected by armed conflict.

CIDA has also provided financial support to Canada's non-governmental and academic communities, which are engaged in innovative programming and policy devel-

opment for children in need of special protection measures. For example, Street Kids International is recognized around the world for its creative employment strategies for children living on the streets, and for promoting a better understanding of why children end up on the street. The University of Victoria's Institute for Child Rights and Development is exploring how best to promote the participation of indigenous children in local community-development initiatives.

On a smaller scale, CIDA has often supported initiatives in child protection through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives and other locally administered funds. More recently, CIDA has begun to make focused investments in child protection through its bilateral programs. This new activity is partly due to the growing recognition within the international community and in Canada that child protection is an important area for international development cooperation.

Through CIDA's Action Plan on Child Protection, the Agency will work toward realizing the following goals which the international community, including Canada, has established:

- ensuring the equal rights of all children to non-discrimination; ensuring that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all actions concerning children; ensuring children's rights to life, survival, and development; and ensuring children's right to express their views on all matters affecting them, and to have those views taken seriously (CRC, 1989);
- providing improved protection to children who are in especially difficult circumstances, and tackling the root causes leading to such situations (Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990's, 1990);
- promoting and protecting the rights of girls (Beijing World Conference on Women: Platform for Action, 1995);

- taking immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency (ILO Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999);
- ending the use of child soldiers in combat and the forced recruitment of children under 18 years of age (Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, 2000); and
- implementing the recommendations made by youth, expert, and ministerial delegates at the International Conference on War-Affected Children.

Source: CIDA, 2001: pg. 28

**Campaign 2000** is a cross-Canada public education movement to build Canadian awareness and support for the 1989 all-party House of Commons resolution to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. Campaign 2000 began in 1991 out of concern about the lack of government progress in addressing child poverty. Campaign 2000 is non-partisan in urging all Canadian elected officials to keep their promise to Canada's children. According to Rothman and Groot-Maggetti, "researchers point out that no significant gains have been achieved since 1989, the year Parliament resolved to end child poverty. According to Campaign 2000, 15.6 percent of all children, or more than one million children, remained in poverty in 2001. And more than half of all children living in poverty have parents who are in the paid labour force" (2004).

### United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is one of the developed countries that have arduously worked to reduce child poverty beyond its borders. However, tackling child poverty has become also a priority for domestic action. In the mid 1990s the UK had the highest rate of relative child poverty in Europe. In 1999, Prime Minister Tony Blair pledged to eradicate child poverty in a memorable speech: "Our historic aim will be for ours to

be the first generation to end child poverty, and it will take a generation. It is a 20-year mission, but I believe it can be done" (UN, 2002). Its commitment is to halve child poverty by 2010; and eradicate it within a generation. UK is implementing tax and benefits changes, and also investing in services for children.

According to the UK statement to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children (UN, 2002), UK is restructuring the machinery of government to put the interests and voices of children and young people at the heart of policies and services:

- to make sure children and young people's voices can shape the priorities and practices of government;
- to bring together government, the voluntary sector, business, local communities and families with a common vision for young people.

SOURCE: UN, 2002.

The **Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)** is a forty-year-old charity campaigning for the abolition of poverty among children and young people in the UK and for the improvement of the lives of low income families. Its aims are: to raise awareness of the extent, nature and impact of poverty; to bring about positive income policy changes for families with children in poverty; and to enable those eligible for benefits and tax credits to have access to their full entitlement. "Poverty is no longer to be seen as something happening elsewhere, but a problem that spreads moral, social and economic corrosion throughout British society." (CPAG, 2005)

#### Ten steps to a society free of child poverty:

1. All political parties to commit to eradicate child poverty.
2. Poverty proof policies – make each consistent with eradicating child poverty.
3. Update the combined value of child tax credit and child benefit at least in line with the

fastest growing of either prices or earnings. The element of this that is child benefit ought to be maximized.

4. Increase the adult payments within income support in line with those for children.
5. Reform the administration of tax credits and benefits – ensure they get the right amount to the right people at the right time.
6. Ensure all children have full access to the requirements – meals, uniforms and activities – of their education.
7. Provide benefit entitlements to all UK residents equally, irrespective of immigration status.
8. Work towards better jobs, not just more jobs.
9. Introduce free at the point of delivery, good quality, universal childcare.
10. Reduce the disproportionate burden of taxation on poorer families.

Source: CPAG, 2005

The **Childhood Poverty Research and Policy Centre (CHIP)** is a UK-based organization that works to inform and influence policy makers in order to more effectively tackle childhood poverty in the global level. CHIP aims to:

- Deepen understanding of the main causes of childhood poverty and poverty cycles, and increase knowledge of effective strategies to tackle it in different contexts
- Inform effective policy to end childhood poverty, ensuring that research findings are widely communicated to policy makers, practitioners and advocates
- Raise the profile of childhood poverty issues and increase the urgency of tackling them through anti-poverty policy and action.
- Work globally to tackle chronic and childhood poverty in transition and other countries.



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