

Introduction

This newsletter introduces the ESRC Global Poverty Research Group (GPRG). At the core of the Research Group is a collaboration between two institutions, the Centre for the Study of African Economies at Oxford (CSAE) and the Institute for Development Policy and Management at Manchester University (IDPM). The formation of this group is a response to the perceived need for a more multi-disciplinary approach to the analysis of poverty and well-being in developing countries. While lip service is paid to the need for collaboration across disciplines the scale and impact of work across disciplines is small.

It is the objective of the Research Group to show how valuable such collaboration can be. The Group functions by bringing together a range of researchers, who are diverse both in their disciplinary backgrounds and their range of expertise across countries. By setting up the Group we have been able to link economists, sociologists, political scientists, human geographers and anthropologists who have many research interests in common.

This applies particularly to the theme of poverty, inequality and well being. In this first Newsletter we report on some of the initial research and show the diverse range of dissemination activities in which members of the group have engaged.

David Hulme - *University of Manchester*

John Toye - *University of Oxford*

Contents

Page

■ International Finance Facility	2
■ Poverty and witchcraft	2
■ First Harvest of the GPRG	2
■ Staying Poor: Chronic Poverty and Development Policy International Conference 2003	3
■ Measuring welfare: approaches from two disciplines	4
■ Capabilities, reproductive health and well-being <i>Jocelyn DeJong</i>	4
■ Subjective well-being, income and capabilities <i>Geeta Kingdon and John Knight</i>	5
■ Joint Review Mission of the District Primary Education Project, India	6
■ How to promote fruitful multi-discipline research <i>John Toye and David Hulme</i>	6
■ List of books	8
■ List of working papers	8

Growth, poverty reduction and human development in Africa

This newsletter coincides with the 2004 CSAE Conference being held at St Catherine's College on 21-22 March. The conference is now held every two years and brings together researchers and policy makers from all over the world working on Africa. The theme of this year's conference reflects some of the central concerns of the GPRG. The conference offers an opportunity to present some of the early findings of the group and to ensure that future research is fully informed of other work going on in the area. Papers on human capital, poverty, risk and vulnerability will be presented, all important issues for the

GPRG. Other issues relevant to African development will also be covered, including sessions on agricultural economics and firm dynamics. It is expected that there will be around 120 presentations over the two days. A grant from DfID has allowed us to fully fund a large number of participants from several African countries. A plenary session is planned for the final day with Jim Robinson, (Berkeley), Tim Besley (LSE), Dany Kaufman (World Bank), and Marcel Fafchamps (Oxford) speaking on 'Trust, government and markets'. The keynote speech will be 'Issues pertaining to health and HIV in sub-Saharan Africa' given by Mark

Gersovitz from Johns Hopkins University. A summary of the conference will be given in the next newsletter.

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The International Finance Facility - what do GPRG researchers think of it?

David Hulme participated in a meeting at the Treasury chaired by Gordon Brown and involving James Wolfensohn (President, World Bank), Hilary Benn (Secretary of State for International Development), President Lula of Brazil, Bob Geldof and Bono. The main objective of the meeting was to channel NGO and faith movements to support the Treasury/DFID proposal for an International Finance Facility (IFF) to double the volume of aid between now and 2015. There was a sprinkling of academics but their role was unclear - maybe to encourage them not to mess up any alliances with their clever critiques!

The meeting was unusually consensual (Bob Geldof and Bono supporting the men in the grey suits) but identified a number of concerns about the IFF. In particular:

- The exact nature of 'conditionality' would be of key importance;
- Doubling British aid still meant the total would be below 0.7% of GNI
- The danger that even bigger issues (trade reform and debt cancellation) would not get the profile they need

Bono (on video link) was good fun and eloquently argued that to get public support the IFF needed 'drama' and a catch phrase. Big plans for mobilising 'civil society' in the UK and beyond during 2005 when Britain has the lead of the EU and G8 (and Brown promises 'development presidencies') are already being cooked up by messrs. Geldof, Bono, numerous religious leaders and others - watch out.

First Harvest of the GPRG

The basic idea underlying the establishment of the GPRG was very simple. Poverty analysis is likely to be enriched if the single-discipline researchers who study it - whether they are economists, political scientists or anthropologists - share their understandings and methods.

The initial task was therefore to open up channels for dialogue between them. The purpose was not to change political scientists into economists or vice versa. It was to expose them directly to ideas that they would not normally encounter, in the hope that they would find new insights to incorporate in their own work.

In the course of these multidisciplinary dialogues held in Oxford and Manchester over 2002-3, many papers were presented. From these, David Hulme and John Toye have selected eight articles that respond well to the need to explain types of poverty analysis in one discipline to the practitioners of another.

It is hoped that these can be published together as a Special Issue of an academic journal. The Journal of Development Studies, a well-known multidisciplinary journal, has agreed to consider the eight GPRG papers as a possible Special Issue, and they will be submitted later this month for consideration by referees.

Poverty and witchcraft

Maia Green and Simeon Mesaki from the University of Dar es Salaam spent six weeks examining the relationship between ideas about poverty and witchcraft in the districts of Ulunga and Kilombero, Southern Tanzania. In Southern Tanzania witchcraft and poverty are strongly associated, with people accused of practising witchcraft frequently thought to desire the impoverishment of their victims. Consequently, people thought to have practiced witchcraft are said to be against development as well as a risk to the community. In some parts of Tanzania such people are threatened with violence and expelled from their

homes. In Ulunga and Kilombero specialists who can suppress the powers of witches deal with alleged witches and their accusers using non violent means which have wide legitimacy in the area. These specialists use a combination of ritual shaving and special medicines to ensure that witches are no longer able to practice witchcraft. Such specialists, of whom one in particular has a monopoly, are viewed by many people, including local government staff, as providing a public service and contributing to poverty reduction.



Dont forget to visit our website at:
<http://www.gprg.org/>

Staying Poor: Chronic Poverty and Development Policy International Conference 2003

website: www.chronicpoverty.org

The Global Poverty Research Group played an active role in last year's Chronic Poverty Research Centre conference "Staying Poor, Chronic Poverty and Development Policy" held in Manchester. This conference was attended by over 350 delegates and keynote speakers including Gerald Ssendaula, Minister of Finance, Uganda; Martin Ravallion, World Bank; Ravi Kanbur, Cornell University and Charles Gore, UNCTAD.

Over 100 papers were presented in parallel sessions which included GPRG sessions 'Sharing disciplinary perspectives on chronic poverty' convened by John Toye and David Hulme; 'Ill health, HIV/AIDS and chronic poverty' chaired by Jocelyn DeJong; 'Chronic poverty and the politics of pro-poor governance', 'The socio-political agency of the chronically poor', 'Chronic poverty and the politics of conflict' and 'Theorising the politics of chronic poverty' sessions convened by Sam Hickey.

Papers presented in the Sharing Disciplinary Perspectives on Chronic Poverty included the following:

Maia Green Representing poverty: Attacking representations - anthropological perspectives on poverty in development

Jocelyn DeJong Capabilities, reproductive health and well-being

Uma Kothari and David Hulme Narratives, stories and tales: Understanding poverty dynamics through life histories

Orlanda Ruthven and Sushil Kumar Making & breaking poverty in Koraon, Uttar Pradesh, India

Michelle Adato, Francie Lund and Phakama Mhlongo

Innovations in mixed method research to understand poverty dynamics: A study from KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Lucy Stevens Chronic poverty in urban informal settlements in South Africa: Combining quantitative and qualitative data to monitor the impact of interventions

Philip Woodhouse Perceptions of poverty among local elites in Uganda

These sessions were well attended - some of the papers from the Sharing Disciplinary Perspectives on Chronic Poverty are now being prepared for a special issue of Journal of Development Studies "Understanding poverty and well-being: Bridging the disciplines" edited by John Toye and David Hulme and also Sam Hickey and Sarah Bracking are editing a special issue of World Development 'Exploring the politics of poverty reduction: How are the poorest represented?'



Measuring welfare: approaches from two disciplines

How should welfare be measured? There is no agreed answer to that question either within disciplines or across them. One of the objectives set for the research is to show how a multi-disciplinary perspective can enhance our understanding of how welfare can be measured, the problems in doing so and to develop a clearer understanding of why answers to the question differ so much. We have begun that research task and in this newsletter we summarise two papers taking very different perspectives.



Epidemiologist DeJong's research on capabilities, reproductive health and well-being is concerned with whether measures of health in general, and of reproductive health in particular, are adequate for any welfare assessment. The paper addresses the conceptual and practical considerations that need to be addressed to develop more satisfactory measures of health well-being. DeJong evaluates the usefulness of Sen and Nussbaum's capabilities approach to analysing reproductive health by examining the extent to which the capabilities framework is useful in analysing three reproductive health problems - maternal mortality, obstetric fistulae and female circumcision.

Kingdon and Knight's study adopts an economists' perspective. They use household data from South Africa to illustrate a general approach to the problem of measuring welfare in which an attempt is made to identify the factors that link income, education and a range of characteristics of both the individual and the household with

a subjective measure of well-being. They compare and contrast well-being poverty with income, basic needs, and capabilities poverty, arguing that the well-being approach is potentially the broadest and can provide a basis for weighting the importance of the other determinants of welfare.

The studies illustrate that one aspect of the differences across disciplines is a difference in method, one seeking very detailed and specific data, the other adopting a more general approach. However, there are potential links. In seeking to measure health outcomes a central issue is how different health conditions can be made comparable. The South African data show that subjective well-being is affected by many other factors than the simply economic, measuring them and interpreting how they impact on welfare is the next task for the research.

1. Capabilities, reproductive health and well-being

By Jocelyn DeJong

Presented at the '3rd Conference on the Capability Approach: From Sustainable Development to Sustainable Freedom', September 2003, University of Pavia, Italy

Globally, reproductive health problems account for a heavy burden of ill-health and preventable mortality, and represent a significant lack of well-being in developing countries. The paper focuses on developing three research questions. The first is primarily theoretical: how can we address the social arrangements that are said to mediate individual capabilities? In particular, to what extent does the capabilities approach help us in analyzing biases within society along political, cultural or other lines that lead to deprivation of capabilities. The second question is more policy oriented: does the capabilities approach help in framing the concerns of reproductive health within broader debates concerning development? The third question focuses on methodological approaches and on how use of the capabilities framework might enhance existing approaches (such as the highly influential approach of the Disability Adjusted Life Years or DALYs developed by the WHO) or demand new approaches to measuring reproductive health.

The paper begins by evaluating the usefulness of Sen and Nussbaum's capabilities approach in analysing reproductive health issues. While capabilities

are ethically individualistic, they do allow for the importance of social relations, care, cultural norms etc. In this sense the capabilities framework is likely to be particularly helpful in analysing reproductive health which inherently addresses relational processes of sexuality and reproduction. Moreover, this approach is able to address doings and beings in market as well as non-market settings - again a positive feature for analysing health outcomes which are not necessarily improved by addressing income, poverty or health care in isolation of broader contextual parameters.

While the value of the capabilities approach is clear, it is argued that there are a number of evident challenges in applying this framework to reproductive health, a field in which health problems are often stigmatised, denied and invisible (in the sense of being very private). Moreover, the need to integrate cultural values and subjective notions of well-being to understand local meanings and implications of poor reproductive health may mitigate against the kind of "informed universalism" that Nussbaum espouses.

The paper concludes that an application of the capabilities framework to reproductive health can be extremely useful in its focus on individual well-being while also taking into consideration relational processes of sexuality and reproduction. The question then posed is whether the ultimate focus of capabilities on the individual, buttressed by social arrangements, is a sufficient framework within which to address the cultural, religious and ultimately political biases in society contributing to poor reproductive health. The issues this question raises are illustrated by examining their implications for three reproductive health problems - maternal mortality, obstetric fistulae and female circumcision.

2. Subjective well-being, income and capabilities *By Geeta Kingdon and John Knight*

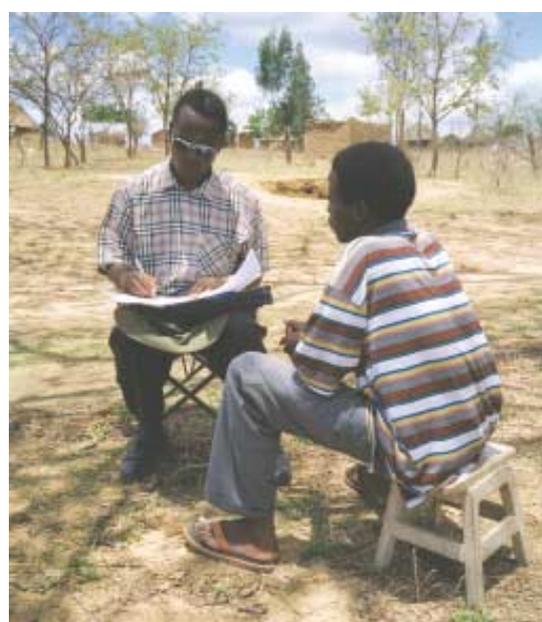
This paper is CSAE working paper 2003-16 and is available at www.csaee.ox.ac.uk

Any attempt to define poverty involves a value judgement as to what constitutes a good quality of life or a bad one. In this paper a measure of the subjective assessment of well-being is used as a measure of welfare and a comparison is made as to how factors which affect this measure of welfare also affect income, the latter being a more conventional measure of welfare and closely linked to standard definitions of poverty. This general issue is illustrated by use of the 1993 South African SALDRU data set containing much socio-economic information on the individual, the household and the community, as well as information on subjective well-being on a scale of 1 to 5.

The authors estimate two equations, one explaining subjective well-being, the second income. Many of the variables that determine income also determine well-being, but their effects often differ in relative importance and sometimes even in direction. The results show that income enters positively and significantly into the well-being function but that, even after the inclusion of income, several other variables are significant in

explaining variations in perceived wellbeing, such as education, employment, health, location, living conditions and community amenities. This suggests the existence of needs which are not automatically met by spending income. The methodology provides weights of the relative importance of these factors in determining well-being. The paper argues that this approach is superior to one that arbitrarily attaches weights - often equal weights for lack of a reasoned alternative - to certain pre-selected components, as in most development Indices such as the UNDP's Human Development Index. They do not, however, generalise from the South African case: the possibility that different preferences across countries will generate different sets of weights opens a new avenue of research.

The authors conclude that it is possible to view subjective well-being as an encompassing concept, which permits one to quantify the relevance and importance of the other approaches and of their component variables. It is planned to extend this work with purpose-designed data on China.



Joint Review Mission of the District Primary Education Project, India

The District Primary Education Project (DPEP) is the most intensive primary education intervention anywhere in the developing world. It was launched by the Government of India in 1994 and together with donor funding from the World Bank, EU, DFID and UNICEF, resources of USD1.62 billion have been committed to it. Its objectives are providing primary school access for all children, reducing overall dropout rates and reducing gaps in enrolments, dropouts and learning achievements across gender and social groups. As of December 2001, the school system under DPEP covered 51.3 million children and 1.1 million teachers. The DPEP is monitored twice a year jointly by the Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the donors. Geeta Kingdon represented DFID at the 17th Joint Review Mission of the DPEP in April-May 2003. It was a valuable opportunity for three days of direct interaction with children, teachers, parents and local school administrators in the Vishakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh and another three days of

talks with senior state level education officials. The visit also provided opportunity for extensive discussions about primary education issues in

Delhi with MHRD educational administrators and with other Joint Review team members who had visited other Indian states.



Geeta Kingdon on the Joint Review Mission of the District Primary Education Project, Andhra Pradesh, India. April 2003

How to promote fruitful multi-discipline research?

John Toye and David Hulme

How might we promote, despite pervasive disciplinary inversion and rivalry, greater collaboration and fruitful multi-discipline social science research?

One way to start is to examine existing patterns of interdisciplinary exchanges. Twenty years ago, little analysis had been attempted of the pattern of citation between economics and other disciplines. Such work as there was seemed to show that economics drew little from any other social science discipline, but that it was drawn on modestly but significantly by political science and sociology.¹ A 2002 study of 42 economics and 20 non-economics journals' cross-citation for the years 1995-97 supports the findings of the earlier study. Economics emerges as a discipline that "builds only slightly on knowledge from its sister disciplines" (anthropology, political science,

psychology and sociology), and as one that is a "modest but significant source of scholarly knowledge for political science and sociology".² Cross-citation between economics, anthropology and psychology was reported as nil!

This is not the whole story. The study relates only to journal articles, and a selection of those. Books remain an important, though declining source of citations. Second, people cite for different reasons, and not always to refer to a source of knowledge that is regarded as valuable. Third, their citation behaviour also changes over time, so that the most influential contributors to a discipline tend to get taken for granted rather than cited.³ Caveats notwithstanding, it would be wrong to claim that much interdisciplinary communication is taking place, or that no more could be achieved.



To expect greater interdisciplinary cooperation might, in this face of this evidence, seem to be the triumph of hope over experience. Yet, if one were hopeful, what should one do? First, it is necessary to see such research as a group or team activity, rather than something to be achieved inside the head of one Renaissance individual. It could be done that way, but there are not enough Renaissance people around to make a difference within the next few years.

Next, it is necessary to find agreement among a group of social scientists of different disciplines that there indeed are multi-faceted social problems, which are important to investigate, and to which any one discipline cannot make a wholly conclusive contribution. There has to be a set of social phenomena that provide an agreed common ground. Fortunately, the awareness is increasing that the study of poverty,

inequality and well-being does provide such a common ground.

Then there must be agreement that, if one discipline cannot provide a wholly conclusive contribution, it is worthwhile to monitor what is being done by other disciplines in this field, conceptually and empirically. This may be hard to achieve. At a minimum, the ideologies of disciplinary rivalry must be abandoned. However, even when they have been set aside, the individual researcher will see that monitoring other disciplines has a certain cost in time and an uncertain benefit in intellectual stimulation. As Lipton foresaw, such research is "expert-intensive, especially since yet more time is needed for inter-expert communication".⁴ At the start, therefore, there must be some way of breaking through this impasse, and regular group multi-discipline seminars could provide it.

How will the benefits of greater collaboration between disciplines make themselves felt? The changes in understanding that this collaboration will bring - if successful - are changes in the perspective of those working within their own discipline. In other words, by attending to the poverty research of anthropologists, economists may produce more imaginative and searching economic analyses; by sharing the understandings of economists of poverty, political scientists or social psychologists may be led to new questions, or to better elaborated answers to old questions.

¹ *Rigney and Barnes 1980, p. 114-27.*

² *Pieters and Baumgartner 2002, p. 504.*

³ *Stigler 1982, p. 173-191.*

⁴ *Lipton 1970, p. 6.*



New Books

Breaking the conflict trap: Civil war and development policy, Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, Lance Elliot, Harvard Hegre, Marta Reynal-Querol and Nicholas Sambanis, Oxford and Washington DC: Oxford University Press and World Bank, 2003.

HIV/AIDS: Sealing up the impact of NGOs, Jocelyn De Jong, London: HIV/AIDS Alliance, 2003.

Insurance against poverty, Stefan Dercon (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Market institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa: Theory and evidence, Marcel Fafchamps, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004.

Rural poverty, risk, and development, Marcel Fafchamps, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2003.

The political economy of education in India, Geeta G. Kingdon and M. Muzammil, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Trade and development: Directions for the 21st century, John Toye (ed.), Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2003.

New Working Papers

To serve the community or oneself: The public servant's dilemma, Abigail Barr, Magnus Lindelow and Pieter Serneels, CSAE WPS/2003-11

What is the impact of non-contributory pensions on poverty? Estimates from Brazil and South Africa, Armando Barrientos, CPRC WP33

The political economy of chronic poverty, Sarah Bracking, CPRC WP23

Food aid and informal insurance, Stefan Dercon and Pramila Krishnan, CSAE WPS/2003-01

Growth and shocks: Evidence from rural Ethiopia, Stefan Dercon, CSAE WPS/2003-12

The politics of staying poor in Uganda, Sam Hickey, CPRC WP37

Where has all the bias gone? Detecting gender-bias in the household allocation of educational expenditure, Geeta G. Kingdon, CSAE WPS/2003-13

Well-being poverty versus income poverty and capabilities poverty?, Geeta G. Kingdon and John Knight, CSAE WPS/2003-16

Poverty persistence and transitions in Uganda: A combined qualitative and quantitative analysis, David Lawson, Andy McKay, John Okidi, CPRC WP38

The dynamics of returns to education in Kenyan and Tanzanian manufacturing, Måns Söderbom, Francis Teal, Anthony Wambugu and Godius Kahyarara, CSAE WPS/2003-17

Openness and human capital as sources of productivity growth: An empirical investigation, Måns Söderbom and Francis Teal, CSAE WPS/2003-06

CSAE working papers can be downloaded from www.csaee.ox.ac.uk
CPRC working papers can be downloaded from www.chronicpoverty.org

The GPRG website is at:
<http://www.gprg.org/>

and includes an extensive outline of current research as well as links to both the Centre for the Study of African Economies and the Institute for Development Policy and Management