

The Commission for Africa and the World Bank *by David Hulme and Francis Teal*

Africa is in the news at the moment. Two major reports have appeared this year, both focused on the problems that Africa faces. The first was from the UN Millennium Project and advanced what it termed a practical plan to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The second was the Report of the Commission for Africa, arguing that ensuring economic success in Africa was part of our common interest. Both reports strongly advocated the need for substantial additional aid for Africa, and that such aid would be wasted without improved governance in many African countries.

In recent weeks, the appointment of Paul Wolfowitz to be the next President of the World Bank has also produced much debate. The perception that he will not be committed to the poverty reduction agenda set by the outgoing President, James Wolfensohn, has sparked controversy and is directly linked to concerns that the agenda put forward by the reports of the Millennium Project

and the Africa Commission will not be fully supported by the World Bank.

In a comment on our web page, John Toyé argues that the evolution of the World Bank and its lending needs to be seen in terms of the political demands made on the Bank. During his term, Wolfensohn responded to the analysis of the Bank advanced by its critics from NGOs and other civil society organisations. The Bank will always be open to criticism from those who on one hand see it as being intent on pursuing an agenda of market and trade liberalisation, and those on the other who ask why aid is necessary for Africa when many Asian countries, just as poor as African countries 30 years ago, have grown rapidly with little aid.

No-one disputes that aid can be wasted. There are grounds for very strong disagreements between those who see it as being pivotal to success and those who see it as at best a useful adjunct to wiser policies. The work of the GPRG focuses on many aspects of the debate as to how to improve Africa's economic performance. In this newsletter, we report on current research in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria and South Africa. We also highlight opportunities for discussion, in particular the upcoming conference 'Assessing the Contribution of NGOs to Development Alternatives' (June 2005); the 'Political Economy of Corruption in Africa' conference (November 2005); and the 'Networks, Behaviour and Poverty' workshop (December 2004).

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New GPRG website

We have redesigned our website to make it easier for you to find your way around. The redesign was made possible with a funding grant from the ESRC, and we will be working on it over the next few months. Already, we have improved the appearance of the home page, developed a more sophisticated navigation structure and added a 'News and Comment' section to provide up to date feedback on current events. We have also updated the links to external sites, added the GPRG working paper series and made the GPRG newsletters available online. Two in-depth project guides have been added to the website and we are currently writing guides to the rest of the GPRG projects. We are also working on developing the dataset resources available online. The address for the GPRG website is <http://www.gprg.org/>

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Ghana Cocoa Farming: Agricultural Productivity

by Andrew Zeitlin

The recent dramatic increase in Ghana's cocoa production provides a rare example of rapid agricultural growth in Africa. From the 2001/2002 growing season to 2002/2003, output in the sector increased by 46%, and from this point output grew by a further 48% to its 2003/2004 level of approximately 736 thousand tonnes. This most recent level exceeded average output of the seven years prior to 2002/2003 by more than 90% (see Figure 1). Since cocoa has been among Ghana's most important export in terms of revenue, and since more than 60 percent of Ghana's population is involved in agriculture, this is certainly an important expansion. The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper claims that a principal cause of failure in previous development efforts has been the preponderance of 'intractable' structural rigidities in the rural sector,

research extends a 2002 survey of approximately 500 farmers conducted by Marcella Vigneri, also of the CSAE. A panel was constructed by seeking out farmers previously interviewed, and a further level of detail was added to

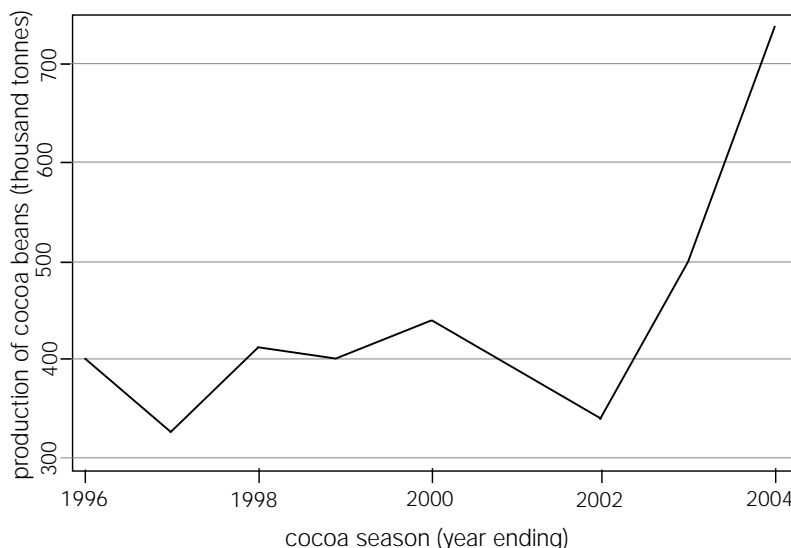


level among existing farmers of 2002, and what are the sources of their increased yields? Second, how have decisions about household labour allocation and investment in human capital changed during this time? And third, what has been the role of economic institutions in fostering this development?

The first goal of the analysis is to explain the increase in aggregate production with microeconomic data. It has often been found that small farmers implementing intensive cultivation techniques have higher yields than larger landholders, but small-scale Ghanaian cocoa farmers have historically performed poorly relative to experimental yields. Thus a fundamental question is whether growth of cocoa farming has been intensive or extensive in form. Preliminary evidence at the micro level suggests that there was a 24% rise in median output per acre devoted to cocoa among existing cocoa farmers, and a 16% increase in median acreage devoted to cocoa by these same farmers. These numbers seem to imply that the bulk of the expansion in output which occurred over the period from 2002 to 2004 was a further expansion of the area of cocoa farming rather than more intensive production.

The factors that changed yields are currently being investigated. Increases in labour and non-labour inputs, factor reallocation across plots and crops, changes in the structure of land tenure, and new investments are all potential explanations. Decisions in the labour market seem particularly important as explanations of the expansion that has occurred. Additional workers hired or additional family labour applied will have a direct effect on output. Moreover, the hiring and firing of sharecroppers and labourers affects both the quality of workers selected and the incentives to which they respond.

Figure 1: Ghana Cocoa Production, 1995 -2003



Source: International Cocoa Organization (2004). Quarterly Bulletin of Cocoa Statistics, Vol. 30, No. 4

propagated by the dominance of subsistence farming. However, we appear to have clear evidence that among commercial crop farmers rapid growth is possible.

New research by Andrew Zeitlin at the CSAE investigates the sources and future implications of this growth. This

measure cocoa production at both the farm and the farmer level. Currently, three dimensions of growth in the sector are being investigated using these data. First, to what extent can the recent output trend be explained by either increases in land devoted to cocoa or improvements in productivity at the plot

Growth and the Rural Sector

Further, the prospects for future growth in the sector are partly determined by current household decisions: cocoa-farming families may choose between reinvesting the surplus of boom years either in their cocoa lands or in the earning potential of household members elsewhere. The latter may be accomplished by undertaking costly investments in further schooling and apprenticeship, or by moving to find work outside the cocoa industry or often the village. Indeed, the present study found rural households to be in a state of significant flux. From the households of 442 farmers interviewed in both 2002 and 2004, there were 394 members who migrated for schooling or work to another part of the country or to another country altogether; a further 12 households had migrated altogether. Understanding the causes of and destinations for the movement of people is essential to understanding how the recent dynamism of the rural sector is related to prospects for growth in the country as a whole.

The third dimension of this work seeks to analyse the role of economic and social institutions in promoting growth in the sector. A representative sample of farmers from the Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, and Western regions have access to an average of more than

three Licensed Buying Companies (LBCs) within their villages but typically sell their cocoa to only one. Though their prices are fixed by the government, the LBCs compete for customers within villages by providing services such as lean-season loans, subsidised inputs, and scholarships. This introduces a potential link between the intensity of local LBC competition and geographic patterns of investment and growth in the sector. Similarly, networks based on kinship or ethnicity may have served to provide insurance and to foster investment. But since migration dynamics and growing competition among LBCs may threaten to erode these mechanisms, the interaction of social and economic institutions in the process of growth and market liberalisation becomes an important consideration.

The decisions of rural households and the resources available to them - partially determined by the institutional context - seem to be crucial determinants of whether even dramatic short-run gains can be used to foster long-run development. This work on recent productivity growth and household responses in Ghanaian cocoa production hopes to shed light on that process.

Research for Results in Education Conference, Prague, April 2005

Geeta Kingdon was invited to be a discussant for several education-related papers from developing and transition countries at the 'Research for Results in Education' Conference in Prague 31 March - 2 April 2005. The conference was organised by the Global Development Network in partnership with the World Bank and other organisations, with the purpose of research capacity building in developing countries. Papers were presented on a wide range of topics, including evaluation of the impact on schooling outcomes of a range of educational interventions; measurement of the 'external' benefits of education, i.e. the benefits of one person's education for other neighbouring persons; assessment of learning; inequality of educational outcomes by gender, race and religion. Among several excellent papers, one discussed by Geeta Kingdon measured the impact of class-size on student achievement levels in Poland. The paper convincingly addressed the problems of measuring the causal impact of class-size by making use of data on the same sample of schools over three years. It found that the effect of reducing class size on student achievement is smaller in Poland than in the other countries where it has been rigorously measured - namely South Africa, Israel and USA. This paper illustrates the kind of educational research that can be helpful to policy makers who are required to allocate scarce education resources between competing inputs.



Broadening Our Understanding of

There is no universal definition of poverty or well-being. Over the last two or three decades, however, it has been increasingly recognised that poverty, well-being and human development are complex multidimensional concepts that transcend the traditional focus on income and consumption. Initially, the emphasis shifted from per capita income to employment and redistribution with growth. This was quickly superseded by a shift towards basic needs construed in terms of inputs (provision of goods and services) and then reborn with a focus on outcomes (opportunities). Later the emphasis broadened further to incorporate human capabilities.

The capability approach pioneered by Amartya Sen now provides the foundations of the human development paradigm and has helped generate a whole new industry of research centred round the United Nations Human Development Reports (published annually since 1990). As the 'welfare'

metric has broadened, so has the way in which social scientists comprehend and analyse well-being and destitution. But is there anything beyond 'development as capability expansion' (or poverty as 'basic capability failure')? Three recent papers by GPRG researchers throw light on this question.

The first two papers revisit the conceptual foundations of the capability approach. They draw on David Clark's fieldwork in South Africa, which investigated concepts and perceptions of human well-being among the urban and rural poor. This study found that the top aspects of a good life in South Africa include jobs, housing, education, income and family and friends (see Table 1). These findings are not generally inconsistent with the results of participatory poverty studies in Southern Africa and other parts of the world. Clark, however, uses them to evaluate both Nussbaum and Sen's versions of the capability approach. One of the most notable conclusions to emerge from this exercise is that most ordinary people seem to share a common conception of the good that is not

fundamentally at odds with most - but not all - of the capabilities advocated by Nussbaum or Sen. However, most theoretical accounts of human capabilities and well-being are fairly abstract and need to say more about the practical side of survival and development in poor countries. Among other things, the capability approach should be expanded to incorporate activities as diverse as saving money, supporting family and friends, avoiding loneliness, having confidence and being self-sufficient.

Consideration of some of the reasons for valuing (or not valuing) certain items (such as Coca-Cola, food, clothing, housing, sport, television and cinema, alcohol and tobacco and advertising) also has implications for the capability approach. People seem to value a diverse range of capabilities, which include many mental and material activities. This finding implies that Sen's framework overlaps with both utility and resource based conceptions of well-being - the very framework he has strived to replace. This conclusion, however, does not imply we should re-endorse traditional categories of welfare and Sen's arguments against these frameworks remain valid. Instead, we only need to recognise that the informational base of the capability approach should make more room for utility (broadly construed to include all valuable mental states), and the material basis of well-being. This is best



Poverty and Well-Being

by David A. Clark

accomplished from within the capability approach as other metrics are too narrow and exclude relevant information.

The third paper, co-written by David Hulme and David Clark, focuses on the conceptualisation, measurement and analysis of poverty. Drawing on the existing literature, Hulme and Clark argue it is possible to identify three 'meta-dimensions' of poverty which relate to (1) depth and severity, (2) breadth and multidimensionality, and (3) time and duration. It is shown that our understanding of poverty has gradually evolved and broadened in each of these spheres. In particular, it is argued that the third and final meta-dimension - time and duration - has been neglected until relatively recently. Yet time, and in particular duration, matter for at least four reasons. First, there is a simple moral argument that says if x has experienced the same forms and depth of poverty as y, but for longer periods, then we should rank x as worse off than y. Second, incorporating time enriches our understanding of poverty by enabling us to move from static comparisons of poverty (which compare estimates at different points in time) to dynamic analyses of poverty (which consider changing patterns of poverty over time). Third, recent research in the USA suggests important linkages between the depth of asset poverty and the duration and persistence of poverty. Finally, there are also important links between the duration of time spent in poverty and individual and household survival strategies, particularly in terms of the effects on cognitive and physical capabilities and human agency. Hulme and Clark conclude by describing one possible way of integrating time into a unified framework for understanding poverty. The development of this framework will be the focus of future GPRG research.



One of the top aspects of a 'good life' - new housing in Murraysburg, South Africa

Table 1 The Top 30 Aspects of a 'Good Life' in Murraysburg and Wallacedene, RSA

1 Jobs	16 Support of family
2 Housing	17 Relaxation
3 An education	18 Good area to live/ live elsewhere
4 Adequate/ regular income	19 Nice/ good clothes
5 A good family	20 Security/ safety
6 Living a religious/ Christian life	21 Having/ caring for children
7 Good health	22 Respect (especially for others)
8 Enough food	23 Sport(s)
9 Happiness/ joy	24 To get married
10 Love (each other)	25 Independence (especially financial)
11 Good friends	26 Peace in the household/ community
12 Education for children	27 Recreation
13 Motor car	28 Communication (between people)
14 Owning a business	29 Acquiring skills/ qualifications
15 Understanding (between people)	30 Furniture

Source: Clark (2003)

- Clark, D. A. (2003), 'Concepts and Perceptions of Human Well-Being: Some Evidence from South Africa', *Oxford Development Studies*, 31(2), pp.173-196.
- Clark, D. A. (2004), 'Sen's Capability Approach and the Many Spaces of Human Well-Being', *Journal of Development Studies*, forthcoming.
- Clark, D. A. and Hulme, D. (2005), 'Towards A Unified Framework for Understanding the Depth, Breadth and Duration of Poverty,' GPRG Working Paper, Universities of Manchester and Oxford, forthcoming.

Labour Markets in Africa

by Justin Sandefur

We now have much statistical evidence documenting the scope of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa and also how it has been changing. Due to this increased knowledge, careful empirical research into the causes of poverty has become possible, using data at the household and firm level to identify underlying economic forces. As part of a major research initiative to extend work in this area, the World Bank recently commissioned a series of papers summarising the state of research on labour markets in Africa, two of which were authored by GPRG researchers.

The first paper in the series, by Geeta Kingdon, Justin Sandefur, and Francis Teal, reviewed the evidence for the pattern of employment growth in SSA over the 1990s and how this was related to changes in the demand for labour. The second paper, by Marcel Fafchamps and Måns Söderbom, addressed a range of issues affecting the climate for job creation in the region.

Central themes from the two studies include

- the need for expansion of low-skilled wage employment, rather than wage increases for existing jobs, if increases in labour demand are to translate into poverty reduction
- the importance of expanding into export markets, particularly in labour intensive manufactures, in order to provide sufficient jobs.

A number of other findings emerge from the papers. First, contrary to most analyses from the structural adjustment period, the studies show that the poor



Figure 1, Source: Freeman, Richard and Remco Oostendorp. 2000. 'Wages around the world: Pay across occupations and countries.' NBER Working Paper No. 8058.

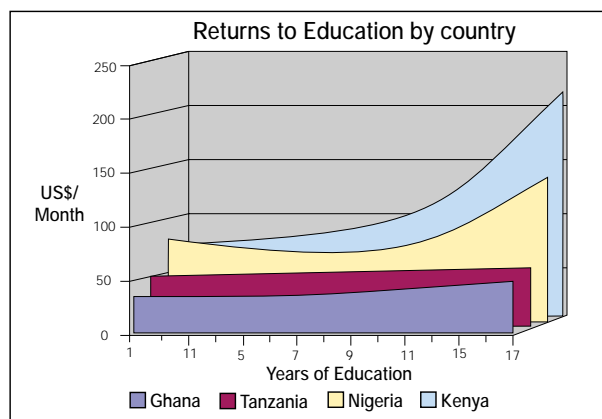


Figure 2, Source: Firm level surveys of manufacturing workers, CSAE data

performance of African labour markets has not been due to a lack of "flexibility", at least as often defined. Wages during the 1990s were in fact quite flexible - adjusting both over time in response to market forces, and across regions in response to local unemployment rates.

However, one aspect of wage flexibility which does present a major obstacle to job creation is the large wage differentials between firms, unexplained by differences in workers' measured skills. Manufacturing surveys in several countries show wages are highly correlated with firm size. In addition, the data show that union workers earn as much as 20% (South Africa) to 30% (Ghana) more than their non-unionised counterparts, after controlling for skill differences. These findings for large, unionised manufacturing firms in Africa are consistent with international comparative data which shows that African wages are relatively high by international standards (Figure 1).

One factor that is often argued to explain poor labour market outcomes in Africa is the low skill levels in the region. However, micro-empirical evidence suggests that the prospect of raising productivity and income levels through educational expansion alone is more daunting than often supposed. From a worker's perspective, data show that the wage returns to primary education are extremely low, increasing significantly only at the secondary and tertiary level (Figure 2). From the firm perspective, surveys of managers in manufacturing firms find that skill shortages are a fairly minor concern relative to other obstacles to doing business in Africa.

Finally, among these broader obstacles to job creation, commonly cited factors for poor firm performance in Africa include

“For large, unionised manufacturing firms, African wages are relatively high by international standards.”



(i) credit constraints, (ii) a poor policy and regulatory environment, and (iii) low levels of infrastructure. Of these, credit constraints became a major policy focus in several countries during the 1990s. However, financial imperfections will not be a binding constraint to investment (and, in turn, job growth) unless firms are able to identify profitable investment opportunities. Firm surveys from six countries (Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, and Zimbabwe) show that, while access to financing was indeed limited, the demand for financing may have been equally low - explaining why financial reforms have largely failed to produce the anticipated short term gains. This is one example of how getting the sequence of economic reforms right can be important. More broadly, these examples attest to the value of rigorous empirical research in guiding policies for poverty reduction on the continent.

Manufacturing Firms in Africa and Exporting *by Neil Rankin*

Neil Rankin has recently completed his DPhil thesis, 'The Determinants of Manufacturing Exports from Sub-Saharan Africa' at the Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE). Using data on manufacturing firms, much of it collected by researchers at the CSAE, he investigated the determinants of exports at the firm level in five African countries - Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria and South Africa. Exporting offers scope for job creation and directly links to policies towards poverty reduction, which are a central focus of GPRG work.

His research revealed the complex nature of exporting among African firms. One conclusion was a strong relationship between firm size and export participation. In the sample, the majority of firms that employed more than 75 people participated in the export market. However, most firms that exported, typically exported ten percent or less of their output. Almost no firms exported more than half their output to Africa. Export specialisation was more common among firms which exported to non-African countries, but these firms were still only a small proportion of exporters.

The picture presented by these results suggests that the low level of aggregate exports observed in African countries is due to the preponderance of small firms in these countries and the small proportion of output exported. Thus the policy issue as to why manufacturing exports are so low is linked to two issues at the firm level. Firstly, why do smaller firms not grow to become large and/or why do not more large firms have an incentive to enter the market? Secondly, why do firms which are in the export market not specialise further? One would think, if fixed costs are important, then specialisation would reduce average costs. Both these questions are the subject of ongoing research at the CSAE.

There is also evidence that firm size is constrained by the size of the local market in the sense, that much exporting is regional. An important finding from the thesis is that firms which were able to enter the export market saw much greater growth of employment than non-exporting firms, as well as rapid growth in productivity. There is also evidence that entry into the export market was associated with more rapid output growth. Insofar as exporting leads to greater output and employment growth there is the potential to impact on one of Africa's major problems - the shortage of jobs.

A further issue investigated in the thesis was the relationship between productivity and exporting. Exporters were more productive than non-exporters, even after controlling for inputs and observed and unobserved firm characteristics. Neil found results consistent with productivity impacting on exporting, and firms learning from exporting. The difference in productivity is not the result of higher productivity growth rates among exporters. While exporting and productivity are related, it appears that a firm's efficiency has a crucial impact on whether the firm remains in the export market or not. It may be that exporting acts as a sorting process where more productive firms are able to continue participating in the export market but less productive firms drop out.

Neil participated in the collection of both firm- and labour-market data in Ghana and Tanzania whilst at Oxford. He was involved in the design of the questionnaires as well as managing the transition from paper-based to electronic questionnaires. He gained valuable experience in survey methodology as well as the practicalities of survey administration. Currently he is a lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Johannesburg, South Africa, where he is using the skills acquired at the CSAE to investigate South African issues, as well as build survey capacity among South African researchers.

Trade Liberalisation and Agricultural Performance: Contrasting Macro and Micro Evidence from Ghana

by Marcella Vigneri

Marcella Vigneri has recently completed her thesis on the question of cocoa production changes in Ghana during the period of market reforms. In order to address this issue, which is extremely important as Ghana remains the only West African country producing the cash crop that has yet to fully liberalise its marketing system, Marcella adopted two different approaches. The link between the macro and the micro evidence on the changes to the cocoa sector was analysed in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the effect of macro policies (centred on promoting price incentives) and the changes that have taken place at the farm level (to assess the extent of cocoa farmers' responsiveness in production and productivity terms). Also, as part of the micro analysis, Marcella designed and implemented a new set of survey instruments (The Ghana Cocoa Farmers Survey) in the areas of greater cocoa production, to address specific questions on land

productivity, investment behaviour, and tenancy contracts.

The empirical analysis has produced several new findings. First, it was found that the impact of smuggling is smaller than expected, implying that the big fall and rise in measured cocoa production during the 1970s-90s reflected actual changes to cocoa output during this period. Second, the increase in aggregate production observed in the 1990s was driven by the traditional method of extensive land expansion, mostly onto the virgin forests of the Western region, with virtually no change in land productivity. Third, while land productivity did not change, labour productivity increased markedly. Underlying this was a major change in the contribution of non-labour inputs (such as fertiliser and insecticides) to cocoa production. These have increased both relative to land and, very substantially, relative to labour.

The thesis goes on to investigate the reasons for low land productivity by investigating three dimensions to

farmers' investment decisions from the new dataset collected in 2002: i) the adoption of hybrid cocoa trees; ii) the investment in cocoa replanting; and iii) the investment in cocoa expansion. It is found that it is possible to obtain higher levels of land productivity on cocoa farms by investing in hybrid tree varieties and replanting old and diseased trees. It remains true that productivity in the farms is low relative to those in other cocoa producing countries and the reasons for this are the subject of on-going research.

Marcella gained considerable experience while at the CSAE in survey design, data collection and agricultural markets analysis, and organised the first round of the Ghana Cocoa Farmers Survey. She also participated in the collection of firm data in Tanzania. Currently, Marcella is a consultant with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, working on food security and agricultural productivity issues in Malawi and Guatemala.



Networks, Behaviour and Poverty Workshop, CSAE, Oxford, December 2004

by Abigail Barr

In developing countries, formal markets and market-supporting institutions are often absent or dysfunctional and, as a result, individuals have to rely more heavily on social networks and behavioural norms to facilitate exchange, support coordination and cooperation, and thereby secure and enhance their wellbeing. Acknowledging that this is the case, researchers interested in development across the social sciences are finding it increasingly important to engage in interdisciplinary discourse. In December 2004, in order to promote such discourse, the GPRG invited 30 eminent researchers from several disciplines including economics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy and geography to take part in a workshop at the CSAE in Oxford on Networks, Behaviour, and Poverty. The list of participants included theorists as well as empirical researchers. Not all of the researchers specialise in poverty-related work, but were included because of their considerable experience in the analysis of socially embedded individuals. The purpose of the workshop was to facilitate an exchange of ideas between these researchers and those who, as development specialists, are endeavouring to take account of social embeddedness in their theoretical and empirical work. The aim was to promote best practice and identify promising avenues for future research into the complex interaction between networks, behaviour, and poverty.

One of the most engaging presentations was made by Jean Ensminger of the California Technology Institute, who presented evidence suggesting that in Ormaland, Kenya, the sons of community leaders, who tend to receive more education than their peers but still not enough to secure a formal sector job, are the

most likely to become involved in corruption. Using network analysis, she showed that the social capital they inherit from their fathers becomes the critical resource in securing their success in their corrupt endeavours. Several presentations focused on informal insurance or risk pooling behaviour, where both social network analysis and behavioural experimental techniques are just starting to be applied. The roles of networking in the dynamics of political influence and of complicity in corrupt and illegal endeavours also received some attention.

Without exception, the participants considered the workshop to be a great success.

The full list of presentations is as follows:-

- Jean-Louis Arcand (CERDI), *'Peasant associations as networks'*, (with Marcel Fafchamps)
- Abigail Barr (Oxford), *'Risk pooling, commitment, and information'*
- Steve Durlauf (University of Wisconsin-Madison), *'Identification of social network effects'*
- Jean Ensminger (CalTech), *'How the poorest of the poor help themselves: A case study of corruption in African villages with implications for community driven development'*
- Marcel Fafchamps (Oxford), *'Coauthorship and networks in economics'*, (with Sanjeev Goyal and Marco van der Leij)
- Diego Gambetta (Oxford), *'The exchange of compromising information and its effects on networks of law-breakers'*
- Garance Genicot (Georgetown University), *'Informal insurance in social networks'*, (with Francis Bloch and Debraj Ray)
- Sanjeev Goyal (University of Essex), *'Structural holes in social networks'*
- Flore Gubert (DIAL), *'Endogenous risk sharing networks'*, (with Marcel Fafchamps)
- Jeffrey Johnson (East Carolina University), *'Political capital as social capital: The evolution of influence in a political network'*
- Dean Karlan (Princeton University), *'Field experiments on social networks'*
- Arno Riedl (University of Amsterdam), *'Voluntary mechanisms for sustaining cooperation: Some recent experimental results on networks and institutions'*



The Winners and Losers from the Rights-Based Approach to Development Conference, IDPM, University of Manchester, 21-22 February 2005 *by Diana Mitlin*

A recent conference held at the Institute for Development Policy and Management at the University of Manchester offered an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of a rights-based approach to development. The rights-based approach gives greater recognition to political relationships than more standard approaches and represents a convergence between the mainstream political issues of good governance and social issues of exclusion and participation. The discussions of 'rights' in the development debate reflect a greater confidence in the depth of democratisation in developing countries, supported by the growing interest in international human rights conventions and the establishment and extension of rights-based constitutions in developing countries.

The conference was deliberately entitled "*The Winners and Losers From the Rights-Based Approach to Development*" in recognition of the diverse needs and interests of the poor, and of the differing opinions amongst analysts. The meeting opened with a presentation by Robert Archer of the International Council on Human Rights Policy who emphasised the value that human rights bring to the development debate. Sheela Patel from the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) in India then raised some questions about the implications of a legal and development campaigning orientation, in respect of some of the realities on the ground. She explained how the National Slum Dwellers Federation, a grassroots organisation which works closely with SPARC, was at present struggling to respond to the large-scale demolitions taking place in Mumbai (India). Whilst many other grassroots organisations and NGOs were opposing and protesting, NSDF were continuing with their work with pavement dwellers and other vulnerable groups to identify, elaborate and negotiate for alternatives with the state. Women pavement dwellers were reluctant to challenge and contest the state because their experience suggested that this would not be effective in advancing their development interests. Professor John Gledhill ended the opening session with a consideration of experiences in Latin America. He noted the ways in which rights-based approaches fitted with neo-liberal conceptualisation of the relationship between state and citizen, while also recognising the alternative perception of some groups that the rights-based approach helps to deepen democracy and develop more inclusive forms of citizenship.

The tensions articulated in the opening session continued in the discussions at the conference. Presenters considered the positive contribution that the rights-based approach had made to the work of groups such as Care and ActionAid and southern NGOs such as Mbororo, Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA) in Cameroon. The difficulties faced by larger agencies such as UNICEF, who sought to use a rights-based approach within current practices to management and programming, were also explored. Conference sessions followed a number of themes including the relationship of the rights-based approach to other development discourses such as aid policy and religion; the ways in which rights affect the direction and dimensions of social change; and the inclusion of rights within broader issues of political and economic governance.



Assessing the Contribution of Non-Governmental Organisations to Development Alternatives, IDPM, University of Manchester, 27-29 June 2005

What roles can NGOs and civil society organisations play in reclaiming development? To what extent can they be seen as the agents for social justice, human realisation and social transformation, principles that have inspired so many to commit themselves to the work of NGOs?

This conference, funded by the GPRG, will consider the extent to which NGOs have secured the development alternatives to which they have aspired, and the extent to which these alternatives have spilled over into other institutions and geographical contexts. It will analyse the contribution of NGOs to the nature and direction of political, economic and social change. The particular areas of focus will be the role of and ways in which NGOs have helped foster alternatives in three principal spheres:

- Discourses and debates on development. How, for instance, have NGOs helped introduce new ideas of social justice and human entitlements into debates on and understandings of development? How have they fostered new types and styles of policy debate? How have they changed the very terms of development debates?

- Institutional arrangements for development. How have NGOs helped shape or re-shape arrangements for promoting human security, for fostering participatory democracy, for financing development, or for arranging the provision of human development services?
- Development at the level of process, practice and intervention. How have NGOs triggered alternative processes of social and economic change? How have they opened up new interventions and strategies for poverty reduction? How have they changed the way in which development is done and unfolds?

There will be a report on this conference in the next GPRG newsletter.

More details are available at: <http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/idpm/research/events/ngo2005/index.htm>

Commonwealth Prize 2005

Geeta Kingdon was a judge for the 2005 Commonwealth Prize for the most outstanding research on education, together with Professors Christopher Colclough and Maureen Woodhall. The winner was Francois Leclercq of DIAL, Paris, for work on the impact of educational decentralisation in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. The judging took place in February 2005 and the prize of £3000 was awarded by Her Majesty the Queen in London, on 14 March, Commonwealth Day.



New GPRG Working Papers

The case for cross-disciplinary social science research on poverty, inequality and well-being, *David Hulme and John Toye, GPRG-WPS-001*

Consumption, welfare and well-being in Ghana in the 1990s, *Francis Teal, GPRG-WPS-002*

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