



**Chronic Poverty**  
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## Chronic poverty and education: a review of the literature

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### What is Chronic Poverty?

The distinguishing feature of chronic poverty is extended duration in absolute poverty.

Therefore, chronically poor people always, or usually, live below a poverty line, which is normally defined in terms of a money indicator (e.g. consumption, income, etc.), but could also be defined in terms of wider or subjective aspects of deprivation.

This is different from the transitorily poor, who move in and out of poverty, or only occasionally fall below the poverty line.

[www.chronicpoverty.org](http://www.chronicpoverty.org)

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## Abstract

Primary education is widely perceived to have a key role in reducing poverty and is positively associated with development-related outcomes such as improving productivity. For girls in particular, it is highly correlated with improvements in health and reductions in fertility, infant mortality and morbidity rates. There is general acknowledgement that it is central to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty. However, this review argues that the processes by which education influences poverty are insufficiently understood, particularly with respect to intergenerational poverty transmission. It finds that the discourses of poverty theorists and educationists currently run on parallel tracks; and that neither discourse benefits as fully as it should from the conceptual advances of the other.

Chronic poverty theorists have developed nuanced definitions of multi-dimensional poverty in relation to both its duration as well as its dynamics. Education is seen as both a cause, and a factor contributing to the transmission of poverty, but little attempt is made in this literature to unpack the 'black box' of education. Conversely, the term 'chronic poverty' hardly appears in the education literature, which typically focuses more sharply on other indicators of disadvantage - such as caste, class, race – that education needs to challenge if it is not to reproduce unequitable social power relations. Its recognition that educational deprivation has multiple causes, including poverty, contests an oversimplified view of the capacity of formal education to tackle various forms of social disadvantage. The use of education to address chronic poverty specifically does not emerge from this review of the literature as a focus of education policy.

Case studies of donor agency policy, non-government agencies and national governments, show that they draw on both economic arguments and rights-based approaches to development to justify the focus on primary education reflected in the international commitments to the Millennium Development Goals on poverty, education and gender. However, the paper also identifies a series of methodological tensions and challenges to demonstrate that the evidence base in relation to exactly how education interrupts intergenerational transmission of poverty is weaker than its confident reiteration by agencies such as these would suggest. It argues for a methodologically innovative future research agenda that brings poverty and education research together to provide a nuanced and detailed understanding of how the two are linked, and to improve policy targeting. Six case studies of policy innovations that use educational measures to address chronic poverty are included in the Appendixes.

**Keywords:** chronic poverty, intergenerational transmission of poverty, cultural reproduction, cash transfer programmes, education.

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# 1 A review of the chronic poverty and education literatures: concepts and issues

## 1.1 Introduction

Over the past 15 years, primary education has been a priority among governments and international agencies, owing mainly to its perceived role in reducing poverty. This view is based mainly on research that has indicated, for example, that primary education plays a role in improving productivity in the labour market and agriculture (Jamison and Lau, 1982; Patrinos and Psacharopoulos, 2002). In addition, education, particularly of girls, has been found to be highly correlated with improvements in health, as well as reductions in fertility, infant mortality and morbidity rates (see, for example, Colclough, 1982; Hannum and Buchmann, 2005; Lewin, 1993; UNESCO, 2002; Watkins, 2001; World Bank, 1995 for reviews). These relationships between education and development-related outcomes are drawn upon to lead to general acknowledgement that education, particularly of girls, 'is a central means to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty' (Birdsall *et al.*, 2005: 26).

This paper does not intend to review again the vast field of education and development, but rather to draw on pertinent aspects of this literature in order to highlight specifically: a) what is known about the relationship between education and chronic poverty; and b) the gaps in what is known. The paper sets out to interrogate the relationships between education and chronic poverty, taking as its starting point the question: In what ways do national policy approaches and programmes address the educational needs of the chronically poor? (see Appendix 1). It begins by reviewing conceptual and empirical literature on this topic which, as will be shown, shapes the focus in policy and programmes.

The paper concentrates on learning that takes place within institutional settings (both formal and non-formal) at the primary level, given the emphasis placed on this in international and national policies, while recognising the importance for poverty of learning that occurs in informal settings (including through interactions in the home, within the local community, etc.) (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974) and at other levels beyond primary (Lewin, 2005; King *et al.*, 2005). It establishes that the processes through which education influences poverty are insufficiently understood – and even less so with respect to intergenerational poverty transmission in particular. This paper has identified what appear almost to be two separate discourses.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, there have been considerable advances in recent years in the

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this review, searches were undertaken in education and social science journal databases. From these, only 24 results were found on poverty + development in the British Education Index and 69 on chronic + poverty + education in ERIC. Using a Swetswise search, 111 articles were found with education + poverty; 16 with chronic poverty; and just two with education + chronic poverty. In Science Direct Search, 176 were found with education + poverty for 1999 onwards. Using ID21, results were 333 for education + poverty and

conceptualisation of poverty; within this, there has been recognition of the importance of education – although this recognition is often based narrowly on human capital approaches focusing on the implications of an individual’s skills acquisition for development. On the other hand, research in the field of education recognises the importance of political, social and economic processes that exclude children from attending school and/or participating and achieving if they do manage to enrol. Yet this literature has shown less concern with what happens to children beyond schooling, and shows limited engagement with the developments that have taken place within poverty debates. These findings are reiterated in education policy approaches internationally, as well as within countries as identified through an in-depth study of education programmes across six countries in South Asia, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. As such, we conclude that the conventional wisdom of the importance of education in addressing chronic poverty is largely unclear with regard to how, why and what forms of education can achieve the desired outcomes. We therefore argue that there is an urgent need to bring together each of these areas of research to inform policy, if education is to be able to play its role in breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty as anticipated.

## 1.2 Defining the chronically poor from an education perspective

### 1.2.1 *Conceptualisations of poverty*

Over the past two decades, there have been considerable advances in the conceptualisation of poverty, with a movement from the income/consumption-based and materialist-based basic needs approaches most prevalent in the 1960s to 1980s, to acknowledgement of the importance of multidimensional deprivation, as articulated in particular in the work of Amartya Sen (see Sen, 1999) and, further, to allowing people to define what poverty means in their

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26 for education + chronic poverty. In online resources, 69 were found with chronic + poverty + education in Eldis ([www.eldis.org](http://www.eldis.org)). Additional searches were also performed (e.g. on intergenerational + education; social mobility + education). Not all papers identified through these searches were relevant to the study, and there was some overlap. Those that were found to be most closely associated with the topic are included in Appendix 2. These have been supplemented with other sources (including from grey literature) with which the authors are familiar. An international conference on Education and Development in September 2005 included a section on Educating and Training out of Poverty, convened by Kenneth King and Pauline Rose, which included 24 papers, none of which directly addressed issues of education and lifecourse/intergenerational poverty.

own terms, i.e. a shift towards more subjective understandings of poverty (see Chambers, 1997).

It is increasingly recognised that poverty is not a static concept. People's experience of poverty will differ depending on the depth of their poverty (whether they are among the 'extreme poor'), as well as whether they endure poverty over a period of time, thus experiencing persistent/chronic poverty (Hulme and Shepherd, 2003), which has implications both for their own lifecourse as well as for intergenerational transmission of poverty (Harper *et al.*, 2003). Some move in and out of poverty over a period of time – the 'transient poor' (Hulme and Shepherd, 2003). Hulme and Shepherd (2003) define the chronically poor as those who remain poor for many years, often all or much of their lives; pass on poverty to subsequent generations; and/or die a preventable poverty-related death. The authors suggest that a person can be categorised as 'chronically poor' if he/she has experienced poverty for a period of five years, given that this is a significant period of time in an individual's lifecourse. This is also based on evidence that those who are poor for this period have a higher probability of remaining poor for the rest of their lives. They also point out that, because panel data measurement points are commonly five years apart, in practical terms the study of the duration of poverty is often based on a five-year period.

A five-year period in the life of a young child is particularly significant, as this will cover the core time during which they have the opportunity to attend primary school in most countries – which, in many low-income developing countries, is often the only exposure to schooling that children receive, given the extremely limited post-primary schooling opportunities (Lewin and Caillods, 2001; UNESCO, 2006). It is, therefore, important to understand the ways in which education, and primary schooling in particular, can influence chronic poverty.

### *1.2.2 Education in conceptualisations of chronic poverty*

Education is increasingly seen as part of the definition of chronic poverty – for example in terms of 'capability deprivation', where 'chronically poor people have little access to productive assets and low capabilities in terms of health, *education* and social capital' (CPRC, 2004: 3; emphasis added).<sup>2</sup> In this definition, capability deprivation as a result of lack of education is understood in terms of lack of skills in particular, whereas 'capability enhancement' is related to improving skills through education. Thus, as an understanding of chronic poverty broadens beyond the narrow income/consumption definitions, education becomes more clearly implicated. It is both part of the definition of poverty, as well as potentially part of the solution for people to break out of the cycle of poverty.

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<sup>2</sup> As Hulme and McKay (2005) usefully review different approaches to conceptualising and measuring poverty, many of which identify education in broad terms as being a component. However, as their paper highlights, evidence-based research continues to be more narrowly focused on monetary measures of poverty.



Within the debates on defining poverty, there is a growing body of literature on childhood poverty in particular. This is concerned with both the conditions of poverty that affect an individual in childhood and later in their own life, and the implications of this for their own children. As Harper *et al.* (2003) note, childhood poverty and chronic poverty are both concerned with the timing of poverty (in terms of the point in the lifecycle at which it occurs) and its duration. As they indicate, such lifecourse and intergenerational poverty 'emphasise the *linked set of processes* that may result in, or entrench, childhood, adulthood or chronic poverty, rather than outcomes or experiences during a specific period of time' (p536, emphasis added). Harper *et al.* (2003: 545) recognise that 'intuitively, a main means of escaping poverty is education taken in its broadest sense (formal and informal schooling, skills training and knowledge acquisition)'. As their paper also indicates, the process of different schooling experiences (as influenced by social norms and practices, for example) affects the possibilities of achieving the desired outcomes in terms of overcoming chronic poverty. These processes are of particular concern to those working in the field of education, as highlighted in the following sub-section.

The tendency of much of the poverty literature reviewed for this study<sup>3</sup> is to restrict education in all its nuances to what many educationists consider a reductionist human capital approach.<sup>4</sup> This needs to be addressed in order that education in its broadest sense is not delimited to its functions in promoting skills acquisition. Equally, it is important not simply to conflate under the heading 'education' the unarticulated assumption that what is being discussed is a particular type or level of schooling provision. An awareness of these issues is of particular importance if education is to fulfil its intended role in addressing chronic poverty. These concerns will be elaborated upon with respect to evidence on the relationship between education and chronic poverty reviewed below.

### *1.2.3 Chronic poverty and notions of deprivation in the education literature*

The term 'chronic poverty' hardly appears in the education literature. While this is perhaps unsurprising, given the general lack of involvement of those researching education in this arena, it does mean that much education research lags behind in its conceptualisations of poverty, and in particular that it does not deploy the more nuanced definitions resulting from other research. As this section indicates, certainly there is some recognition of the importance of lifecourse and intergenerational effects of schooling, but educational research tends to lack a focus on how schooling actually does effect interruptions to the poverty cycle.

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<sup>3</sup> See Footnote 1 for the range of literature reviewed – this includes research originating from both poverty and education perspectives.

<sup>4</sup> Even though the notion of human capital and its application has become more technically sophisticated, it is unable to open up the 'black box' of education provision – see Fine and Rose (2001) for a critique of human capital.

While there has not been as much of an explicit focus on ‘poverty’ in general, or ‘chronic poverty’ in particular, this is in part because it is recognised that educational deprivation is caused not by poverty alone, but by a multitude of interrelated factors, of which poverty is just one. However, as Hulme (2003: 399) comments, the chronically poor are ‘a heterogeneous group who commonly live in remote rural areas or conflict zones, suffer from disabilities, lack social networks, and displaced and/or experience social discrimination in its many varied forms’. These forms of exclusion clearly often interact to become mutually reinforcing, and much of the education literature includes consideration of one of the groups in particular, while relating this to other forms of educational disadvantage. Nomadic groups, who are educationally disadvantaged by mobility, environmental degradation, conflict, political marginalisation, agricultural policies and so on (see Dyer, 2006; Krättli, 2001), are one such example.

In this respect, aspects of poverty are integrated within a broader understanding of the multidimensional approaches that require education to be considered in relation to other forms of capability deprivation. This, therefore, raises a question of whether, in educational terms, the focus of attention on a more aggregated group of the ‘chronically poor’ is relevant or potentially more useful. While extending the poverty definition to a multidimensional concept is relatively recent, and a specific focus on the chronically poor may have the advantage of allowing deprivation to be seen in a more holistic way, there is a risk that such a focus could detract from an in-depth understanding of specific causes of educational exclusion (see du Toit, 2004). Similar arguments have been made with reference to gender and social exclusion: Jackson (1999) argues, for example, that a multidimensional social exclusion framework is in danger of marginalising gender, and also weakens an analysis of the particular forms of disadvantage and discrimination that women face relative to men in particular contexts. Some literature focused on education conventionally also considers exclusion in broader terms, and is concerned about the ways in which different forms of disadvantage can interact (e.g. Sayed *et al.*, (2007) study on gender, race, class and caste in South Africa and India).

As Green and Hulme (2005) note, chronic poverty is about not just duration but also dynamics, and this implies a need to look at forms of social relations that produce and reproduce poverty. Here, although poverty *per se* is rarely its core focus, the literature on education has made considerable advances in conceptualising education’s role in shaping social relations through its influence (either positive or negative) on attitudes, cultural and other knowledge and traditions. The dominant focus on the human capital aspects of education within the poverty literature appears to make little use of these conceptual tools. These issues are well rehearsed and demonstrated, for example, in the seminal work of both Paulo Freire and Pierre Bourdieu, two highly influential educational theorists. Freire’s (1972; 1974) work (see Box 1) informs approaches to adult education as well as ‘child-centred learning’ in schools; Bourdieu (e.g. Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) provided a seminal discussion of cultural capital (defined as non-economic forces such as family background,

social class, varying investments in and commitments to education, different resources, etc.) and how it influences academic success.

### Box 1: Freire and educational thought

In Freire's view, much education follows what he termed a 'banking approach' – where a teacher ('the oppressor') deposits knowledge in the minds of learners who, as the 'oppressed', are seen as passive recipients of received wisdom. Because these 'oppressors' (teachers) possess economic, social and political power, the authoritarian models of teaching they exercise enable education systems to maintain social control. To break this cycle, Freire argues the need for an approach to learning that develops 'critical consciousness' and so contributes to breaking the barriers between oppressors and the oppressed. This view clearly resonates with expanded definitions of poverty in relation to powerlessness, and associated moves towards the importance of addressing voice and agency within education. Freire's work has been influential in informing participatory approaches to development, and adopted in particular in ActionAid's REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques) approach to adult education (Archer and Cottingham, 1996), as well as in HIV/AIDS peer education programmes within schools (Campbell and MacPhail, 2002) and the *Escuela Nueva* programme (see case study below).

Within the educational literature, the capacity of formal schooling to act effectively as the agent by which exclusion – and thus obliquely poverty – can be addressed is highly contested. Rather, it has long been acknowledged that education is an obvious arena for the reproduction of unjust and inequitable social conditions – schooling itself can contribute towards the reproduction of, for example, class and gender differentials (e.g. Bowles and Gintis, 1976; 2001; Whyte, 1943). For Bowles and Gintis (1976), the school is analogous to a mini factory in which the social relations of dominance, hierarchy, respect for authority, punctuality, etc. are replicated, in order to socialise future workers into accepting positions they are expected to occupy later in life. This understanding of some of the social functions of schooling runs counter to the expectation/assumption in much of the poverty literature that schooling is an effective instrument for the generation of human capital. Rather, where inequalities are already wide, it is more likely that these will be perpetuated across generations, with schooling playing a role in maintaining exclusion both from and within the school. Clearly, then, this has implications for its role in addressing chronic poverty. Schooling can reinforce the socialisation process rather than challenging power relations; without this challenge, it will not bring about the desired effect of interrupting prevailing trends in the way it socialises children (Stromquist, 1998).

Developing critical consciousness within education systems is difficult. Breaking down power relations between teachers and pupils, for example, is likely to be politically and socially challenging, and also requires consideration of specific cultural contexts (Choksi and Dyer, 1996) and teachers' professional cultures (Clarke, 2003; Dyer *et al.*, 2004). In recognition of the need to promote the centrality of the learner to educational processes, shifting the emphasis away from the teacher, educational reform programmes are likely to target the formal school curriculum. In relation to education's capacity to act as a vehicle of social change and impact on poverty, however, this formal agenda may be less influential than

what learners read between the lines of the hidden curriculum. Here are found implicit messages that sustain rather than challenge the social status quo – for example in relation to ‘conformity to regulation’ and ‘obedience to the instructions of superiors’. Indeed, it has long been recognised that ‘not all schooling is education. Much of it is mere qualification-earning’ via examination-oriented systems which, while they may send comforting signals to employers, are not orientated towards encouraging ‘imagination, creativity, honesty, curiosity and the determination to get to the of bottom things’ (Dore, 1976: 11-12).

If formal education is to contribute to processes that can support an escape from chronic poverty, it is crucial that it moves on from being viewed as a narrowly defined, academic examination oriented system towards an approach that is proactive to enhancing learners’ self-confidence, self-esteem and critical thinking. These outcomes in turn can build voice and agency, which are understood to play crucial roles in relation to poverty. Developing and strengthening education systems to play these roles is one of the key challenges facing the educational community in the context of the Education For All agenda (EFA), and in its progress towards the second (education) Millennium Development Goal (MDG) and contributions to achieving the poverty and gender MDGs (see below).

Thus, researchers of education do not yet seem to have engaged directly with the relatively recent developments in defining poverty. To some extent the issues raised within these definitions are not new in education. The importance within education of processes of learning and the multidimensional causes of educational exclusion highlights a need for multidimensional poverty approaches to go beyond viewing education in narrow, static human capital terms, and also to take more cognisance of some limitations of current school systems (see next section). Education research, in turn, needs to have a better understanding of how educational processes interconnect with other aspects relevant to transmission of poverty across generations.

#### *1.2.4 Conceptualising the links between education and chronic poverty*

An attempt to summarise the virtuous circle between education (in particular primary schooling) and poverty is summarised in Figure 1. The diagram focuses on unpacking the educational aspects of the relationships.<sup>5</sup> The implication of the inverse of this diagram is that, where international/national, community, individual/household and school factors do not result in primary school completion and appropriate learning outcomes, individuals are likely to remain in a vicious cycle of poverty, which is likely to persist through the lifecourse and into future generations. If, for example, the school environment is not conducive to learning, there are limited job opportunities for school leavers and children suffer from ill health and/or

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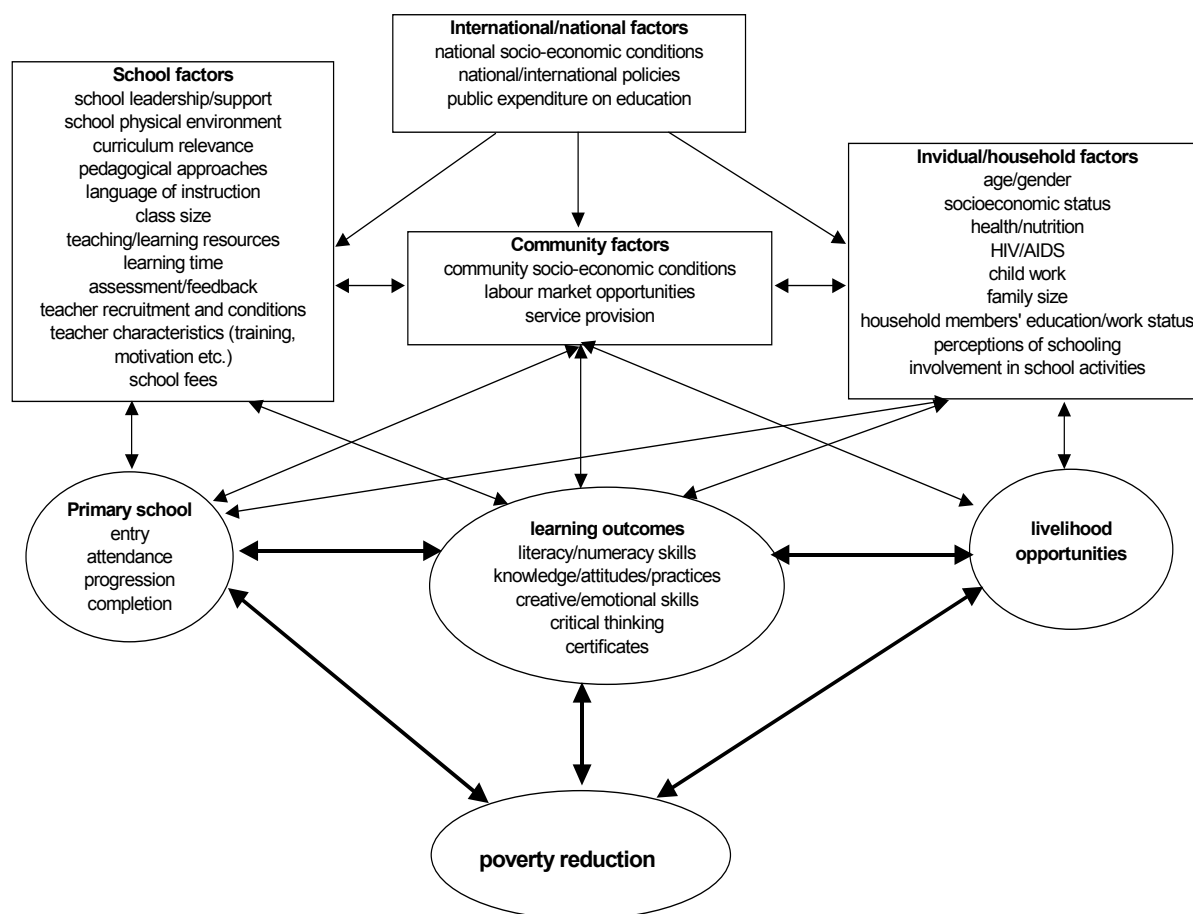
<sup>5</sup> The complexity of livelihood opportunities is recognised. There is a vast literature on these in the context of sustainable livelihood frameworks, a review of which is beyond the scope of this paper. It is, however, evident that education also tends to be understood within these from a human capital perspective (see [www.livelihoods.org](http://www.livelihoods.org)). Similarly, poverty also needs unpacking, as earlier sections of the paper indicate.

are expected to work to support the household, it is unlikely that they will complete their primary schooling, nor learn effectively while in school. This, in turn, will adversely influence their livelihood opportunities, reinforced by the likelihood of risk averseness towards livelihood adaptation and diversification, influencing the health and nutritional status of themselves and other members of their household, etc. The combination of these factors will result in their inability to escape from poverty – and this is likely to continue into the next generation unless action is taken to break the cycle.

While the diagram tries to highlight the possible relationships between education and poverty through these different linkages, it is important to note that each of these relationships is complex, as are the processes occurring within each of the boxes. Importantly, social and power relations within and between households and communities, which are hidden within a diagram of this kind, can have important influences both on schooling opportunities and experiences (including with respect to the ways in which teachers relate to children in the classroom), as well as the effect of these on the alleviation of poverty.

A set of complex processes and relationships are included within the box of ‘school factors’ which have been a core focus within the field of education – including a concern for unpacking what is meant by educational ‘quality’ and how this can influence demand for schooling as well as learning outcomes. In its comprehensive review of different perspectives on educational quality, UNESCO (2005a: 37) notes ‘Teaching and learning is the key arena for human development and change. It is here that the impact of curricula is felt, that teacher methods work well or not and that learners are motivated to participate and learn how to learn.’ As indicated below, on the one hand these studies have rarely been extended to consider the influence of factors such as curriculum choice (for example, academic versus vocational), teaching styles, etc. on post-schooling opportunities – an understanding of which is crucial if education policies are to address chronic poverty effectively. On the other hand, work undertaken from a poverty perspective has not tended to open up sufficiently the black box of ‘school factors’ or ‘learning outcomes’ – so, while recognising the importance of education, has not considered which types and aspects of education provision need to be addressed, or the implications of different learning outcomes, if education is to have the desired effect on chronic poverty.

Figure 1: Linking primary schooling and chronic poverty



### 1.3 Evidence on education and chronic poverty

As indicated above, chronic poverty may adversely influence educational opportunities yet, for many, it may also be ‘the critical path out of poverty’ (CPRC, 2004: 6). It is, therefore, important to understand how the chronically poor, who are caught in a multidimensional trap, can get on to and stay on this path. Given the importance commonly placed on education in addressing poverty, the evidence to date has had a relatively low profile in research related to chronic poverty specifically. Where education is mentioned as a means to escape chronic poverty, it is frequently associated with structural factors such as race, ethnicity, gender disability etc., and attention is paid mainly to the need to overcome constraints to access to education (with more limited concern for quality) (CPRC, 2004).

This section reviews the available evidence in relation to access to education by the chronically poor, and the ways in which education has been found to influence chronic poverty. It also indicates gaps in the available evidence, owing in part to the limited attention education has been given in applied research on chronic poverty. This will lead to

consideration of appropriate methodological approaches that are required to ensure that the ways in which education influences chronic poverty are better understood.

### *1.3.1 Access of the chronically poor to education*

Despite repeated international and national commitments since the 1960s in particular to universalising primary schooling, there has been widespread systemic incapacity to achieve this (UNESCO, 2002; Colclough, 2005). Research in the field of education has demonstrated that exclusion of the poor from school occurs for reasons that include factors integral to the government system as well as factors beyond its immediate control (see, for example, Colclough *et al.*, 2003).

Evidence exists that the poor (defined in income/consumption terms) are most often excluded from schooling (see case studies for examples). Of those out of school globally, more than three times as many children are estimated to be from poorest households compared with richest households (UNESCO, 2005b). While these data do not distinguish the chronically poor in particular, and also do not incorporate a multidimensional understanding of poverty, further evidence within the field of education highlights the exclusion of particular groups of children. These include, for example, those classified by the state as Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Other Backward Caste (OBC) children in India (see India case study for further details); children from less accessible rural areas (see also the Colombia and Brazil case studies); mobile and migrant children (Dyer, 2006; Krätli, 2001). It also highlights the general trend of lower primary enrolment and completion of girls compared with boys (Colclough *et al.*, 2003; UNESCO, 2004). When poverty is extended to include material assets, there is some evidence that children from land-poor households are more likely to be in school, as they do not have work opportunities competing for their time (see Bhalotra and Heady, 2003 on Ghana and Pakistan; Sharp and Devereux, 2004 on Ethiopia).

Children are likely to be removed from school if households face 'shocks' that result in them moving in and out of poverty in the short term. Once children drop out of school, there are many reasons – some related to poverty and others to the organisation of schooling (such as progression via a generally single-entry, lock-step system that lacks the flexibility to deal with interrupted learning) – that make it probable that they will remain out of school (Colclough *et al.*, 2003; PROBE, 1999; UNESCO, 2002). This could then have a longer-term impact on themselves and their family, with the possibility that they will move from a state of transient poverty to chronic poverty.

Within the school environment several factors could result in children's exclusion and/or inability to learn effectively. There is often a lack of water or sanitation facilities, which particularly affects older girls; the provision that does exist often fails to meet quality thresholds (Colclough *et al.*, 2003; UNESCO, 2005a) – even where improving such quality is a specific policy and programme thrust (Dyer, 2000). Poor quality provision – in terms of not

only physical facilities but also the relevance of that provision to peoples' situations and aspirations – is the most likely fare for those living in poorer areas of countries, with the most marginalised groups (such as nomadic pastoralists, hunter gatherers, indigenous peoples) being also the most educationally marginalised (de Jongh and Steyn, 2006; Dyer, 2006; Edwards and Underwood, 2006; Jha and Jhingran, 2002). Poor households in these areas in particular are further disadvantaged by constraints related to inability to pay expenses (including school fees, as well as other indirect costs of schooling such as uniforms, books, pens, etc.)

Furthermore, poor households often need children to work in income-generating activities, on family farms and/or in household domestic work. Many children combine schooling with work, although this can be a delicate balancing act: working may bring in the income to enable them to pay school-related expenses, but may also cause school dropout if, for example, a child is too tired from working to concentrate at school and thus falls behind too far to achieve satisfactorily (e.g. Dyer, 2005; Heady, 2000; Woldehanna *et al.*, 2005). Evidence about the gender implications of work/school balances is not conclusive. Often, boys are expected to work, whereas girls are expected to contribute towards the household. While this can be detrimental to both boys' and girls' schooling, in some cases boys' work enables them to earn money to contribute towards their own schooling – an option that may not be available to girls (Colclough *et al.*, 2003). If education is differentiated, for example by primary and secondary levels, differences to the gender patterns may emerge (e.g. UCW, 2003). Moreover, decisions about a child's schooling are often taken at household rather than individual level, thus some children work in order that their siblings can attend school (*ibid*). However, more evidence is needed on how such choices are made, and the implications for each of their futures.

International effort is directed towards eliminating the 'worst forms' of child labour,<sup>6</sup> as these are clearly detrimental to children's schooling and general wellbeing. With due regard to context and the availability of non-formal alternatives, the International Labour Organization (ILO) generally advocates enrolment in formal education as the most durable way forward for children released from 'worst forms'; here, the quality of that educational provision may shape whether it is an effective instrument to use to challenge the intergenerational transmission of poverty (see Dyer, 2005 for a discussion of some of these issues in Yemen). In contrast, where a workplace is not detrimental to a child's wellbeing, it can provide a more stimulating cognitive environment than the often tedious routine found in the poor quality schools that are accessible to the poorest children (Dyer, 2000; Dyer *et al.*, 2004; Moore,

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<sup>6</sup> Defined under ILO Convention 182, Article 3, the term *the worst forms of child labour* comprises: a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.



2000;). In some cases, formal schooling may 'de-skill' children, making them unfit for their traditional occupations yet unable to gain alternative employment (Dyer and Choksi, 1998), and so contribute to a decline rather than a gain in a family's wellbeing in this and future generations.

While the direct and indirect costs of schooling, and children's income-generating activities are clearly related to poverty, they are not the only reason for children being out of school. For example, girls and boys experience different constraints in relation to access to schooling, and these constraints are not necessarily related to poverty. In particular, socio-cultural norms and traditions, such as early marriage, dowry, initiation ceremonies at the onset of sexual maturation, have been found to be a deterrent in many countries (Colclough *et al.*, 2003). Children might also be excluded on the grounds of disability and, as noted above, along with other forms of exclusion such as race, class, caste, religion etc., this can result in children remaining out of school regardless of their poverty status (Sayed *et al.*, 2007). Thus, even where chronic poverty is addressed, intra-and inter-household inequalities in schooling may remain.

In general, education policies and programmes often aim to improve the access and inclusion of children suffering from a range of crosscutting disadvantages, such as those indicated above, in which poverty is implicated even though it is rarely the primary or explicit thrust of policy initiatives. The use of education to address chronic poverty specifically has not emerged from this review of the literature as a focus of education policy. This will be explored further with respect to specific country examples in the case studies below.

### *1.3.2 Overcoming chronic poverty through education: existing and missing evidence*

As noted, education is understood to influence development outcomes in a variety of ways. This section will review the evidence and argue that, in order to understand whether and how education influences and can assist in tackling poverty, and chronic poverty in particular, two steps need to be taken. On the one hand, a more nuanced understanding of education is required than is generally evidenced in the poverty-focused literature. On the other hand, education-focused studies need to extend their gaze beyond the schooling process to understanding the influence of this on post-schooling opportunities and so the influence that schooling experiences can have on chronic poverty. We would also note that the educational policies and programmes reviewed for the case studies echo the lines of argument derived from the research discussion below, in relation to their expectation that formal and non-formal education, if made accessible to disadvantaged and excluded groups, will impact positively on disadvantage and exclusion, and thus (while this may not be specifically targeted) on both immediate and persistent poverty.

The 2004 Chronic Poverty Report (CPRC, 2004) refers to evidence showing that formal education is strongly associated with decreased possibility of chronic poverty; the research it

refers to indicates that the level of schooling at which this might happen can vary between countries. This literature mainly includes education as a variable, in terms of years/levels of schooling and, not surprisingly, finds that in some cases this variable is insignificant or negative (Harper *et al.*, 2003). Harper *et al.* (2003) provide a relatively comprehensive review of the literature available, which highlights the importance of education as a means of escaping poverty. As with other reviews on education and development more generally (including Hannum and Buchmann, 2005, for example), it draws primarily on economics of education analyses – and this is not surprising, given that this is the most widely available literature on the topic. However, this approach does raise some problematic issues. These analyses focus on the contribution of education to economic growth at the macro level, and to labour market productivity, mainly with respect to paid employment in the formal sector, at the micro level. Such micro-evidence of positive outcomes of schooling is commonly based on analyses of rates of return to education in the labour market, which have been widely adopted to justify a focus on primary schooling, as this is the level that studies most commonly show to have the highest private and social returns (see, for example, Patrinos and Psacharopoulos, 2002 for a review of available studies). Among the studies on rates of return that are frequently cited, however, many date from the 1980s or before, and cannot necessarily be extended to the present day; analyses of rates of return of this kind have been heavily criticised from a methodological perspective (see, for example Bennell (1996) for a critique). Such analyses assume, for example, that jobs are available for which school leavers can compete without discrimination, and that wages proxy for productivity in the labour market.

Importantly, such studies usually focus on the benefits accruing from additional years or levels of schooling. One year of schooling, however, can mean something very different across countries (Breton, 2004), as well as across schools within countries. This measure fails to capture wide variations in the formal and hidden curriculum, quality of schooling with respect to teaching and learning approaches adopted, competencies of teachers, class size, availability of learning materials and so on. While some studies have sought to address this by including variables to measure quality (most commonly using pupil/teacher ratios, but also sometimes other measures, such as teacher training or pay, indicators of physical infrastructure, etc.) (see Hannum and Buchmann, 2005, for a review), these are mainly focused on school inputs, with more limited attention to process and outcome indicators. The massive expansion in primary education systems in many developing countries, particularly where fees have recently been abolished (e.g. Malawi, as discussed in the case study) is also likely to have implications missed in existing rates of return approaches. So many more children are now gaining access to primary schools that, in time, the returns to secondary schooling are likely to become relatively more important. In addition, the studies are unable to address the implications of economic crises and austerity programmes, which have had important impact on labour markets in many developing countries (Bennell, 1996).

The impact of primary schooling on enhancing agricultural productivity is also highlighted in the economics of education literature, but there are very few recent studies. Jamison and Lau's study (1982), based on data from Korea in the 1970s, is commonly cited to support this relationship. Their evidence shows that the positive relationship *only occurs in a modernising environment*, an aspect that is frequently ignored in policy statements drawing on such evidence to justify a focus on primary schooling (King *et al.*, 2005). By contrast, studies conducted in predominantly stagnant African agricultural economies indicate that 'estimates of returns to education in agriculture are typically insignificant' (Appleton, 2001, p2; see also Appleton and Balihuta, 1996), suggesting that education might have a more limited effect in such conditions than conventionally perceived. Moreover, the schooling–poverty relationship is found to vary considerably across African economies (Appleton *et al.*, 2003), suggesting other factors are also at play – a consideration often missing from the literature of this kind.

In general, within the economics of education literature, studies largely ignore non-farm self-employment and non-economic benefits of education. Based on a comprehensive review of econometric research on the impact of education (and, in particular, cognitive skills) on wage and self-employment income in developing countries, Glewwe (2002: 471) concludes that 'while the impact of cognitive skills on income from self-employment is clearly an important topic, there is very little research on it [...] Much more research is needed to understand how cognitive skills affect self-employment income'. Glewwe's paper also reviews available evidence on the impact of education on other key socioeconomic outcomes apart from income, most notably health status, migration, marriage prospects, fertility and political and community participation in developing countries. Again, this literature is 'very new and very small, leaving many gaps' (*ibid*: 475).

Female education is often considered key to breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty. This is in part because educated mothers are considered more likely to send their own children to school, but also because of other 'externalities', including perceived benefits in terms of reduced fertility, infant mortality and improved family health. Much of the literature again considers this relationship through a focus on years/level of schooling primarily using economic analysis. While such analyses are increasingly technically sophisticated, they are unable to unpack the reasons why education has had the observed effect. There have been more recent attempts in the economics of education literature to consider the pathways through which education might have an influence. For example, Christiaensen and Alderman (2004) explore the relative importance for children's nutritional status of knowledge acquired by future mothers, literacy and numeracy skills acquired and familiarity with and receptiveness to modern approaches to medicine – concluding that maternal nutritional knowledge could play an important role in improving nutritional status of their offspring. While this is beneficial in disaggregating different aspects of educational outcomes in order to understand what might make a difference, as with much of the economics of education literature, it is still based on inadequate proxies, and is unable to identify the influence of teaching and learning processes within the school.

Further, instrumentalist arguments (viewing female education as a means to improving the wellbeing of others, rather than focusing on the implications for the women themselves with respect to building self-esteem, self-confidence, etc.) are problematic on several counts. They lack the critically informed gender perspective that is apparent in the wide-ranging literature on gender and education, failing to recognise not only the additional burdens placed on women, as they are expected both to be more productive at work at the same time as enhancing support to the family (Stromquist, 1998), but also the processes through which the relationship between mothers' and household wellbeing might operate. While conventional understandings of the relationship posit that the perceived positive effects of education can be achieved through increased use of contraceptives, delaying the age of marriage, influencing desired family size, etc. (see Cochrane, 1979; Schultz 1993; 2002, for example), it fails to explain *how* education can have this affect. This requires attention to whether and how education influences power relations between the sexes, as well as the importance of education in developing voice and agency of females in its own right. As Basu (1999) highlights, the relationship between female education and fertility may not be as straightforward as is often claimed, since it is not only about when educated women marry, for example, but also about whom they marry (importantly, the relative education level of their spouse) and the reproductive autonomy this allows them. Other studies, particularly in South Asia, primarily using anthropological approaches, have questioned the validity of the relationship between education and fertility decline (e.g. Jeffrey and Basu, 1996; Kumar and Vlassoff, 1997) and found the relationship to be highly variable and context specific, with reference to both the level of development as well as the nature of gender relations in the society. These studies suggest that autonomy is crucial to women's control over their fertility, and that the relationship between education and autonomy is mediated by the cultural relations of patriarchy (Heward, 1997).

### *1.3.3 Plugging the evidence gaps: more promising approaches*

In contrast with the conventional economic approaches, Hulme (2004) adopts an insightful life history approach to understanding multidimensional aspects of poverty from the perspective of a particular household in Bangladesh. This approach offers evident promise of being able to address aspects of the missing gaps in our knowledge of how education may assist in overcoming chronic poverty. The study indicates that the two individuals identify lack of education as part of the reason why they are poor although, from the information available, this is limited to their expressing it in terms of the number of years of schooling they have achieved. While not the intended focus of Hulme's particular study, further exploration of their views with respect to education might shed light on why they think their lack of schooling has had an influence on their poverty status – is it a result of their inability to access employment opportunities or of a lack of skills in enhancing their agricultural productivity, or because it excludes them from certain for a, either because they would be expected to read and write or because they lack confidence to participate – or a combination of these?

Similarly, using participator approaches, evidence from 'Voices of the Poor' indicates that the concerns raised by those participating in the research were mainly around gaining access to school and obstacles preventing children from attending (for example, school fees) (Narayan and Petesch, 2002). Further investigation of the answers as to why the poor feel education would be beneficial is not offered, so in this respect the study misses an opportunity to further understandings of the nature of the links between education and poverty reduction. A recent Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC) study on Uganda highlights again lack of education, along with 'other forms of human capital' as a key barrier to moving out of chronic poverty (2005: 9). This begins to provide more of a specific focus on the type of education that is seen an important as an escape mechanism, identifying education associated with diversifying away from self-employment in agriculture, and recognising the importance of post-primary education for this.

While these kinds of multidimensional approaches to poverty provide important insights by ensuring that all dimensions are addressed, they do not allow an in-depth understanding of *how* particular dimensions, such as education, might have an influence. This would require further analysis from an education perspective specifically to explore its role in poverty, rather than focusing on poverty and trying to understand which factors, including education, have an influence. As the literature referred to in this review highlights, the former approach is relatively rare.

One exception is a paper by Wagner (1989) on education in Morocco, which unusually adopts a longitudinal approach relating schooling to life beyond it. Based on a relatively small sample of 72 primary school leavers, the study finds that, where children achieved five years of primary schooling, they were able to retain their literacy skills (measured in terms of Arabic, French, cognitive skills and maths) – contrary to other research, which suggests relapse into illiteracy if children drop out at this stage. The study differentiated between those attending vocational training programmes (whose literacy was most likely to improve), those who were employed in different types of jobs and those who remained unemployed (mainly girls involved in domestic tasks). From ethnographic observation and statistical analysis, the authors conclude that the results indicate that Moroccan females may be more motivated to learn and practise their literacy more often than their male counterparts. Furthermore, 'girls retained more academic skills than boys, but were much less likely to be employed, a finding which calls into question certain claims about the impact of schooled knowledge and literacy on employment in developing countries' (p307) – i.e. the employed sub-sample generally had lower literacy levels than the unemployed (mainly females) with higher literacy levels, even though both had a similar level of education. The study concludes that, where productive jobs are in relative demand, modest advantages in literacy may not be the determining factor in securing work. While this does not take into account the other potential benefits of girls' education in terms of fostering health and wellbeing in the household, it does highlight the need to view education within the social, cultural, political and economic environment that influences the ways in which individuals learn and can utilise the skills gained through

schooling. While this study was relatively small in scale, its approach and focus are a rare example of relating primary schooling to post-schooling experiences in a way that can move towards gaining a better understanding of the ways in which the relationship generally claimed may or may not hold. An extension of such an approach to other contexts (and on a larger scale) would be beneficial for gaining insights into the pathways through which education can influence chronic poverty.

Moreover, studies of this kind are needed in the context of rapidly expanding education systems, which could further call into question the conventional arguments put forward of the benefits of primary schooling on labour market and agricultural productivity, etc. For example, Kabeer (2000) argues that, with moves towards the universalisation of primary schooling, education has become more of a widely felt need, rather than a privilege of the elite, with basic literacy and numeracy viewed as prerequisites for improving livelihood opportunities. Yet, in Malawi, it is suggested that the increased primary enrolment following the abolition of fees in 1994 has increased pressure on higher levels of schooling, given that primary schooling is unable to improve livelihood opportunities to the vast number of children leaving primary school (Kadzamira and Rose, 2003; see Malawi case study). Again, questions arise of the type and level of education required to influence chronic poverty.

#### *1.3.4 Provision of education for the chronically poor: who should provide? And how?*

The arguments in favour of formal primary schooling have been rehearsed above, and found to be somewhat less conclusive than their confident reiteration would suggest. Some would argue the need to look at post-primary for poverty reduction (Lewin, 2005) and particularly a skills-based approach (King *et al.*, 2005). The debate around the relative benefits of a vocational, skills-based education is not new (see Foster, 1965), and remains unresolved. Vocational education may well provide skills more relevant to people's everyday lives, given the likelihood that those living in rural areas will remain working in agricultural-related activities, for example. But, to the extent that schooling is seen as a 'screening' device, with academic 'credentials' offering opportunities for formal employment opportunities (Woodhall, 1987), those who can choose a more academic route to acquire certificates are likely to do so. Thus, vocational education can create a two-tier approach, with limited educational options potentially trapped in a cycle of poverty-vocational education-agricultural livelihood-poverty. There are, clearly, no easy answers to this particular question.

Who provides the education in question is another pertinent issue. The general consensus is that the state should be the main provider of primary schooling, and that this is important to ensure access of all children on an equitable basis (Colclough, 1996; see also discussion of the Education Guarantee Scheme in the India case study). In particular, given that households might be unable to make the necessary short-term investments, or cannot anticipate the longer-term benefits either to themselves or to society more generally, a case is often made for public provision of education, particularly at lower levels, with a general

consensus since the 1990s that schooling at this level should be fee-free (see Malawi case study). However, low levels of education are commonly found to be a cause and outcome of poverty, at the level of both the household and the state. Governments often lack resources to provide sufficient school places of acceptable quality (Colclough *et al.*, 2003; UNESCO, 2005a) and private sector provision has expanded to fill the gap, finding a space because the expansion of government systems across sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia has often had an adverse impact on schooling quality. In some circumstances, private schooling can be valued as a status symbol, particularly where tuition is in English, which raises hopes that this will lead to future job opportunities in the private sector – even though it is not necessarily evident that this is achieved (Rose, 2005).

Much of the growth in private schools has been in schools charging relatively modest fees. The proposal that these low-budget private schools can be accessed even by those on a low income provides a stark example of the failure of education literature to conceptualise poverty appropriately. For example, a leading proponent of the argument that private schooling benefits the poor (Tooley, 2005) presents, in a four-country case study, research that lacks any attempt to define what is meant by the ‘poor’. Rather, selection of areas within countries on the basis of where the poor are considered to live appears to be the main criterion for supporting the view put forward that private schools are catering for the poor. In general, areas selected within India, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya are slum and shanty town areas in urban and peri-urban parts of the country, where the population is involved in petty trading, fishing-related activities, etc. Evidently, this is where there are large numbers of people living on low incomes – however, they cannot be compared with those living in remote, rural areas of the countries, where private schools are in any case less common. It is extremely unlikely that those attending even these low-budget private schools are among the chronically poor; rather, they are more likely to be categorised as the ‘easy to assist’ poor (Hulme and Shepherd, 2003), or even as the poor who are in a position to assist themselves. In Malawi, for example, where it is estimated that over 65 percent of the population lives below the government’s income-related poverty line, even relatively modest fees of K200 (approximately US\$2) per month charged by low-budget private schools situated in a low-income area of the capital, Lilongwe, are likely to be beyond the reach of the poorest, as this would comprise over one-third of the resources available per person (Kadzamira and Rose, 2005). Tooley’s claims that these low-budget schools are serving the poor more effectively than government schools need to be treated with caution in the absence of an appropriate conceptualisation of poverty. His argument that since private schools are more directly accountable to their ‘clients’, they can provide better-quality schooling than counterpart government schools, seems equally doubtful. It is debatable whether unknown, unregistered private schools, which cannot offer end of primary cycle examinations, will provide a positive signal to employers and secondary schools. The relative benefits of such private schooling as opposed to government schooling for the chronically poor require further, and methodologically rigorous, exploration.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can be another important provider of basic education to the poor (although some prefer to remain advocates for improved quality of state provision, rather than to deliver basic services themselves). Where they do provide, their provision is often aimed at 'hard-to-reach' children, either in remote rural or pastoralist areas, or street-children in urban/slum areas, as well as children with special educational needs, for example (see Bangladesh, Malawi and Ethiopia case studies). This provision is welcome in that it offers educational opportunities to those who would otherwise be excluded. Yet it again raises questions as to whether this is creating a two-tier system which, while relieving the constraints of those who otherwise might not be in school, does not allow them to enter the 'mainstream', in terms of either schooling or employment opportunities, and hence jeopardises an escape from chronic poverty.

### *1.3.5 Concluding remarks*

Unfortunately, there is very little evidence to help us to understand the processes through which education can support an escape from chronic poverty. An analysis of trends in education and poverty over time is required, in order to see how educational opportunities have changed for households affected by poverty in different ways. This might include, for example, whether households affected by transitory poverty are able to sustain their investment in education when they face short-term constraints, or whether such constraints lead to children being permanently withdrawn from school, which in turn could mean they join the chronically poor. The implications of the future opportunities for those studying via a vocational or academically oriented curriculum, or for those gaining an education delivered by non-state providers, also deserve attention. A call for research of this nature requires consideration of methodological approaches that can be used in studies to support an improved understanding of these processes.

## **1.4 Methodological approaches and their constraints in understanding the links between education and chronic poverty processes**

The preceding section highlights shortcomings of the evidence available on education and chronic poverty and notes that this owes in part to insufficient attention to investigation of this relationship theoretically and empirically, even though the benefits of education are much heralded. This section considers another aspect of the existing evidence: the methodological approaches to research in this area. Just as empirical approaches to poverty analysis remain heavily dominated by economists and econometricians primarily adopting quantitative approaches (see Hulme and McKay, 2005), the preceding section highlights that this is equally true within the literature focusing on education's contributions to development. We argue that reliable evidence on the role education can play in addressing chronic poverty is constrained in part by the limitations of methodological approaches adopted within research



on education in development contexts, which have not tended to use longitudinal approaches to understand lifecourse and intergenerational processes.

Much of the work on childhood lifecourse and intergenerational poverty in the UK and elsewhere in the North is based on longitudinal datasets using panel data analysis (Harper *et al.*, 2003). Within the UK, advances have been made in relation to analysing the benefits of learning across a person's lifecourse, relating this to implications for families and communities. This research, undertaken by the 'Wider Benefits of Learning' programme based at the Institute of Education, University of London, is concerned 'with outcomes of learning that range beyond qualifications and academic achievement, these outcomes include wider and softer skills such as behavioural and emotional development, the development of good communication skills and relations with others, citizenship, healthy lives, social inclusion, social cohesion and the valuation of learning and the support of learning identities' (<http://www.learningbenefits.net>). This primarily uses panel datasets that include limited information on teaching and learning processes. As education becomes part of broader definitions of poverty, challenges arise with respect to causality and endogeneity in quantitative research. In order to address this, the Wider Benefits of Learning research has complemented its quantitative analysis with qualitative data collection, allowing for a better understanding of the processes behind observed patterns.

Quantitative sociologists have undertaken research to examine the role of education in social mobility in the UK and other developed countries – again, there is very limited evidence of this research being extended to developing countries.<sup>7</sup> An important reason for this is that panel datasets of the kind used in these studies are less commonly available in the South. Even where they are, they are usually limited in the variables included that allow an understanding of the processes of education; those that do exist are more often related to demographic and health issues (Harper *et al.*, 2003). As Buchmann and Hannum (2001: 92) conclude in a review of research of education on social mobility in developing countries, 'the literature on the effects of education on occupational and social mobility in developing countries, with a few notable exceptions, has been dominated by single-country studies often utilizing less-than-ideal data and methods'.

The Young Lives programme is a notable recent example of a longitudinal approach to exploring children's lives, through a study taking place in India, Ethiopia, Peru and Vietnam following 2000 children and their caregivers from 6-7.9 months until they are 15 years old. In addition, in each country 1000 7.5-8.5-year-old children and their caregivers were interviewed in the first round of data collection to give an immediate comparative picture of older children. In this study, education is included as one of the socioeconomic status

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<sup>7</sup> A review of papers presented at the International Sociology Association's research theme on 'Social Stratification and Mobility' over the past five years identified a number relevant to education's role in social mobility, but none on developing countries – see <http://www.soc.duke.edu/~rc28/conferences/conferences.html>.

variables, as well as a moderator, with child welfare outcomes including literacy and numeracy within lifeskills (Subrahmanian, 2005). However, information on education included in the questionnaires associated with Young Lives with respect to education specifically (particularly with respect to in-school factors) is limited, with more emphasis given to health-related aspects of wellbeing.

Where longitudinal approaches have been adopted, these have been relatively small-scale studies, more often with the aim of assessing literacy and school achievement rather than what happens to children beyond school (see, for example, Booth, 2003; Wagner *et al.*, 1989). While some tracer studies on school graduates have been undertaken to understand the ways in which their schooling has shaped their futures, particularly with respect to job opportunities, these have tended to focus on the secondary level (see Al-Samarrai and Bennell, 2004, for example). However, these have traced school leavers at one point in time, and rely on recall, which is likely to miss nuanced understandings of educational processes that have shaped lives beyond schooling.

Hulme's (2004) life history approach mentioned above, together with participatory approaches aimed at getting people to give their own reasons as to why they are poor, could be taken further to interrogate the ways in which people see education as contributing to perceptions of the poverty status or, if it does not, why not. Such life history and participatory approaches could also be extended to find out the role that people consider education has (or has not) played in helping them move out of poverty, where this has been the case. Longitudinal tracer studies of children from different types of education programmes (for example, vocational versus academic; NGO or private versus government primary provision) would also enable a picture of the ways in which education has shaped lives, and the different opportunities this has given rise to. In general, longitudinal research is needed that is capable of looking at school processes, requiring a combination of quantitative and qualitative aspects, which will enable a more nuanced understanding of the relationship of schooling with poverty processes.

## **1.5 Chronic poverty and policy contexts**

This section considers the international and national policy contexts of education and chronic poverty. It focuses on the international development targets related to education, to which most countries have signed up. It then looks in more detail at key donors that are particularly influential in setting international policy agendas, as well as international NGOs that play a key role in the education arena, and at the national policies of the six case study countries.

### ***1.5.1 Chronic poverty and international educational policy***

As the 2004-2005 Chronic Poverty Report notes, while the MDG associated with education is universal in its aim (i.e. that all children complete primary schooling by 2015), the MDG on poverty anticipates that half of the world's population will remain poor by this date. This

implies that the focus for poverty policies will be on those who are easiest to reach; from this, we can anticipate that the chronically poor, who are much harder to reach, will not be a prime focus for poverty policies. The discrepancy between these two goals seems to suggest that the chronically poor will (magically) be able to overcome barriers to completing primary schooling, but perhaps it carries an implicit recognition that there will be a time lag between the chronically poor accessing school and the lifecourse and intergenerational effects this will have on them and their families. Again, this raises complications of causality in the relationship between education and chronic poverty and, by not being explicit, could mean that primary education policies are not sufficiently focused on education's role in combating chronic poverty.

### Box 2: EFA goals and MDGs associated with education

#### EFA Dakar Goals

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and lifeskills programmes.
4. Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential lifeskills.

#### Millennium Development Goals

Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education

*Target 3.* Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empower women

*Target 4.* Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015.

There have been important criticisms that the MDG for education has narrowed targets associated with the EFA agenda established at World Conferences on Education For All in Jomtien and Dakar in 1990 and 2000, respectively (see, for example, Colclough, 2005; UNESCO, 2002). EFA goals consider issues related to lifeskills, which does not focus only on 'new knowledge' but also on the importance of developing 'psycho-social skills', which 'have to do with the way we behave – towards other people, towards ourselves, towards the challenges and problems of life. They include skills in communicating, in making decisions

and solving problems, in negotiating and asserting ourselves, in thinking critically and understanding our feelings', recognising the important role of teachers in promoting this. The EFA discourse, clearly, is that of educationists. Despite the attention given to EFA, Carr-Hill (2006) points out in relation to the educational inclusion of nomadic groups, many of which are becoming increasingly impoverished, just how little international progress has been made since 2000 in responding to the Dakar call to 'broaden the means and scope of education' and 'develop more tailored and imaginative approaches'. This owes in part to the greater emphasis given to the MDGs by international agencies.

In comparison with the EFA agenda, the education MDG is more limited in scope, reinforcing a narrow focus on the link between education and poverty from a human capital perspective. This is closely linked with the conventional rates of returns arguments discussed earlier, to justify a focus on the primary level. As discussed earlier with respect to research on the relationship between education and agricultural productivity, this justification owes in part to selectivity by international policymakers in interpreting and drawing on results of particular studies (see King *et al.*, 2005). As King *et al.* (2005) suggest, greater attention needs to be paid to the 'enabling environment' in which anticipated benefits of education to poverty reduction occur – from the perspective of both the education environment, specifically with respect to the need for addressing post-basic and skills development, as well as the wider non-educational environment in terms of the socioeconomic context.

Limitations in the international discourse are recognised in the UN Millennium Task Force Report on education, a key message of which resonates with issues raised above (Birdsall *et al.*, 2005: 23):

Education is about much more than children sitting in schools, acquiring skills that can be objectively tested. Both the inputs to and the outputs from education are far more complex than much of the international discourse suggests. Typically, inputs to education are described in technical terms, such as the optimal pupil to teacher ratio or the availability of textbooks and chalk. Outputs are often described in economic terms, including the higher incomes associated with each additional year of education. But because education is first and foremost the vehicle through which societies reproduce themselves, both the inputs and outputs in an education system may more rightly be thought of as a set of ideas about how a society is structured, and should be structured in the future.

The report goes beyond much of the conventional international discourse to recognise that 'decisions affecting what is taught, who is taught, and how people are taught are part of the process of social reproduction' (p24), and that this is likely to be a slower process than recognised by the MDGs. Even so, much of the evidence it refers to in support of the importance of education in addressing the intergenerational transmission of poverty is based on the economics of education literature, which is unable to unpack these processes, as we have discussed. The report concludes that, if systems are to be changed such that the poor

are not locked out, creating a vicious cycle, then attention needs to be paid to political leadership and institutional reform, in addition to increasing investment and inputs.

### *1.5.2 Donor agency policy: World Bank, DFID and USAID*

In general, international agency documents show awareness of both rights-based as well as economic-related arguments in favour of supporting education's role in poverty reduction. They also recognise that poverty is a reason for children being out of school and that education in turn is necessary to address poverty (DFID, 2001; USAID, 2005; World Bank, 1999; 2002a). The weight of emphasis on rights-based versus economic considerations varies across agencies. They show concern for 'empowerment' and recognise education's role in good governance, health, etc. – seeing education as a panacea for many ills – although ultimately support for this relies most heavily on human capital arguments. The papers do not differentiate between different types of poverty in terms of depth or duration, although they do identify different groups that are most likely to miss out on schooling opportunities and, therefore, require particular policy attention. For example, the US Agency for International Development (USAID, 2005: 7) refers to 'underserved' populations owing to 'poverty, rural residence, ethnic background, disability, or sex'. Similarly, for the UK Department for International Development (DFID, 2001: 10), 'poverty, gender discrimination and social exclusion are all barriers to Education for All', and 'UPE [Universal Primary Education] is the first priority for widening life chances of those who live in poverty, an absolute precondition for sustainable development' (p12). The World Bank (1999: 12) draws attention to 'inequitable access across population groups – girls and women, rural populations, indigenous peoples, the handicapped, the urban poor and other disadvantaged groups'. Each of these documents refers to those not accessing education as if they are in mutually exclusive groups – although clearly they are likely to face multidimensional forms of disadvantage.

The World Bank claims to be a leader both financially and intellectually in external support to education (see Fine and Rose, 2001). In terms of its intellectual role, the work of Psacharopoulos (1973; 1981; 1985; 1994 and, more recently, Patrinos and Psacharopoulos, 2002) is used across a range of documents, including World Bank strategies (World Bank, 1995; 1999) to justify the positive relationship between primary schooling and productivity in the labour market. Yet, again, there is no critical assessment of the evidence. As Jones (1992) suggests, Psacharopoulos brought to the World Bank the type of educational research organisationally necessary for research to have an influence over the character and quality of lending in education. In particular, since the 1980s, human capital has provided the opportunity for the neo-liberal agenda to be applied to education, allowing the World Bank to continue its involvement, and even increase its influence, in the education sector (Fine and Rose, 2001).

As Lauglo (1996) notes, the 1995 World Bank review of education ignored the moral and social impacts of education, in terms of both the problems that schools might generate and

their potential for remedying the social dislocations of modernisation and restoring social cohesion. While there is some recognition of broader objectives of education in the subsequent World Bank Education Sector Strategy (1999), emphasis on rates of return remain evident. The processes of teaching and learning, which transform inputs into outputs, tend to remain outside the scope of the World Bank's approach to education, leaving the black box of educational provision firmly shut (Fine and Rose, 2001). It does not, in turn, provide analysis of the processes through which educational provision can influence poverty.

The relationship between education and children's wellbeing is also frequently cited in international agency literature in support of girls' primary schooling in particular (also often drawing on World Bank-sponsored research). For example, the 2005 DFID girls' education strategy (DFID, 2005) refers to Patrinos and Psacharopoulos (2002) to support the argument that productivity returns to education are higher for girls, which ignores the implications of gender discrimination in the workplace. In addition, it refers to a widely cited paper by Laurence Summers (former Chief Economist at the World Bank) (Summers, 1994) to justify the argument that 'children of mothers who receive five years of primary education are 40 percent more likely to live beyond the age of five' (p2). The apparent precision of the figures again mask the un-nuanced presentation of 'education'. We can only emphasise, as we did earlier in relation to research on the relationship between girls' education and fertility decline, that poverty discourses must look not only at the education and non-education environment but also *inside* the education environment at both formal (overt) and non-formal (hidden) curricular processes within institutional settings.

### 1.5.3 *International non-governmental agencies*

Approaches to the relationship between education and poverty put forward by donors are often reiterated by international NGOs, although their arguments are more clearly related to a rights-based perspective. The Global Campaign for Education (an umbrella association of NGOs and teachers' unions from around the world, involved mainly in advocacy on the EFA agenda) also focuses on a rights perspective, particularly with respect to 'children, women and all disadvantaged, deprived sections of society' ([www.campaignforeducation.org](http://www.campaignforeducation.org)). ActionAid UK places emphasis on the relationship, seeing education as 'one of the best ways for people to lift themselves out of poverty' ([www.actionaid.org](http://www.actionaid.org)). Their approach reflects the Freirean tradition that education can become a form of self-help (Archer and Cottingham, 1996; also Bandura, 1995). Save the Children is more explicit in recognising education's role in intergenerational mobility and linking this with a child rights approach: 'access to high quality education can be one of the best ways of breaking the poverty cycle – a major barrier to children's rights' ([www.savethechildren.org/education/index.asp](http://www.savethechildren.org/education/index.asp)). Again, their focus is on particular sub-groups that are most often unable to go to school, including the 'disabled, females, or those from ethnic minority groups, with their work focusing in particular on education in emergency situations'. Such an approach is also evident in Oxfam. In a comprehensive review following an Oxfam campaign on the right to education, the NGO draws on economics of education literature referred to previously to support claims made

about the importance of primary schooling, noting that the poor see education as a mechanism for them to 'produce their way out of poverty', and for 'stopping the transmission of income-poverty across generations' (Watkins, 2001: 46). As with the Global Campaign for Education and other NGOs, Oxfam's emphasis in recent years has been to put pressure on international agencies to fulfil their commitment to increasing aid to education, in line with the promise made at the Dakar EFA Conference that no country will be thwarted in its attempt to achieve EFA owing to insufficient resources (see Rose, 2005).

Like the donor agencies, international NGO policy statements recognise the important role education can play in overcoming poverty. They draw on both economic arguments, frequently citing literature critiqued above, and rights-based approaches to development. However, there is a general absence of nuanced consideration of the processes through which education can address poverty in general, or chronic poverty in particular.

#### *1.5.4 National policy, plans and programmes*

In order to explore the implications for chronic poverty in national, policy, plans and programmes within a range of political and economic settings, six countries have been selected. In each of these, we explore both the implications of poverty on children's schooling experiences, as well as the relationship between this and possibilities for addressing chronic poverty. These countries were selected to provide examples across different regions (India and Bangladesh in South Asia; Brazil and Colombia in Latin America; and Ethiopia and Malawi in sub-Saharan Africa). They do not claim to represent other countries within these regions, but seek to highlight the types of strategies used in different contexts, and the possible implications of these for chronic poverty. This section introduces some of the issues that will be addressed in more detail in Section 2.

#### *1.5.5 Inclusion of poverty in national policy and plans*

The expectation that education contributes to poverty reduction is widespread in national policy documentation but, reflecting the discourses elsewhere, examined earlier, lacks detail on how. Three examples from the countries selected here for case studies suffice to illustrate the issue.

In India, the core strategy of the Tenth National Plan (now branded the Economic Road Map) for 2002-2007, under the heading 'Poverty Reduction will be Targeted', reflects the familiar assumption that education will in some way mitigate poverty: 'Top priority will continue to be given to ensuring access to elementary education, especially for girls, and to primary health care, especially for women' (India Planning Commission, 2002: 7). In a later section (Section 5 on reducing poverty), it notes that, while 'all Plans in India have had the reduction of poverty as one of their prime objectives' and 'despite food grains surpluses, a major effort in primary education and basic health programmes, and an enormous multitude of special targeted interventions, the incidence of poverty remains unacceptably high' (ibid: 13). The

document puts forward a 'comprehensive pro-poor strategy' with eight elements, of which the fifth is 'Continue to give top priority to primary education enrollment and attendance, especially of girls' (ibid). This will be achieved through improving basic education, through a national programme (see case study for details) that 'has a special focus on the educational needs of girls, members of SCs and STs, and other children in difficult circumstances' (ibid: 18). Section 5 of the document concludes (p21): 'But if there is one primary theme which runs through most anti-poverty programmes, it is priority for girls, to counter the discrimination they face from before birth onwards. Investment in their nutrition and education, as future mothers, will bring proven widespread benefits in reducing poverty.' This key planning document does not provide any elaboration of the processes by which educational improvements and poverty reduction will be linked and, as the last citation above illustrates, does not mention children in poverty as a particular educational target (perhaps because poverty is widely understood in India as an intrinsic aspect of the SC or ST condition).

Ethiopia's Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programme (SDPRP) relies heavily on statistical analysis to show that, where household heads are educated, the household is less likely to be poor. Associated with these assertions, recent econometric studies in Ethiopia have found that 'completion of primary schooling by household head or wife decreased the chance of being "chronic" poor', particularly in urban areas (Bigsten *et al*, 2003: 101; see also Kedir and McKay, 2005).

Similarly, in Malawi, both the second education development plan and the Poverty Investment Framework locate themselves within the broad policy context of the Poverty Alleviation Programme, with the view that 'Education is the centre piece of this policy [PAP]. Increased investment in education can yield broad economic and social benefits. Evidence shows that education is associated with increased agricultural productivity, higher incomes, lower fertility rates and with improved nutrition and health. The education of parents, especially mothers, has been shown to affect the cognitive, affective and physical development of the child' (MOE, 2000: 2). The Poverty Investment Framework thus also draws on rates of return arguments to support the link between education and poverty.

#### *1.5.6 Cross-sectoral or sectoral approaches for tackling chronic poverty?*

As the case studies below show, each of the countries has implemented education programmes that are aimed to varying degrees at addressing poverty and exclusion. These programmes are commonly integrated into the country's education plan, increasingly in the form of a sector-wide approach. For example, in the case of Bangladesh, the Primary Education Development Plan II integrates government and donor-funded strategies such as the primary education stipend programme within recommendations for improving and supporting equitable access to quality schooling. This is complemented by a range of strategies aimed at addressing improvements in the learning environment, teacher recruitment and motivation, teaching practices and community awareness – each of which



may indirectly support learning for chronic poverty alleviation. In some cases, the programmes remain outside sector-wide plans. These include ones that are externally funded through a project-based approach (such as village-based schools in Malawi) and also cases where particular approaches to education are not 'recognised' by governments (as has been the case with non-formal education in Bangladesh and, previously, in Ethiopia).

Some of the countries also have introduced poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), or similar plans addressing cross-sectoral issues. In principle, the approach intended within these could bring together sectoral perspectives within a more holistic approach to addressing poverty, including consideration of the processes that education and other interrelated factors could play – and the interplay between them. However, in practice, many PRSPs tend to consider sectors separately within an overall poverty framework, without including a cross-sectoral analysis. In the cases of Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Malawi, for example, the way in which education is included within PRSPs resembles the information provided in sector plans. This is also the finding of a review of countries with a full PRSP by May 2003 (18 in total), which finds that the education component is a “copy-summary” – sometimes a carbon copy of the relevant document in the Ministry of Education with a concern for sector-wide issues and challenges more than a specific aim of poverty reduction’ (Caillods and Hallak, 2004: 70). The review indicates that, even though education appears to be more comprehensively covered compared with other sectors, ‘there is no innovative teaching/learning reform proposed in the PRSPs that could be regarded as having been designed to address the specific needs of the poor while at the same time seeking quality improvement, relevance and meeting the target of integrating them in the development process’ (ibid: 75).<sup>8</sup>

This review indicates that plans do include other measures that could have an influence on the poverty agenda through addressing the demand for schooling by the poor (including incentives, scholarships, free access, school meals, etc.), expanding supply, as well as supporting more general trends towards decentralisation and community participation. Similar experience is found more generally across education sector reform (including an absence of reforms aimed at the teaching and learning process specifically aimed at supporting the poor) with respect to the country case studies reported below. Moreover, in line with the focus in the MDGs, priority is given mainly to formal primary schooling in PRSPs, with extremely limited reference to secondary and higher levels (Lewin, 2005), or other aspects of the broader EFA agenda (Caillods and Hallak, 2004).

Thus, even where there is an attempt to adopt a cross-sectoral approach, difficulties in moving beyond a sector-specific focus are evident. In any case, it can create problems of ownership of the strategies by sectoral ministries that would ultimately be responsible for

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<sup>8</sup> For recent innovative approaches to curriculum reform with respect to poverty alleviation, see <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/poverty/poverty.htm>.

their implementation (Lucas *et al.*, 2004). As such, a sector-focused approach might be more effective in practice – but would need to ensure due attention is paid to poverty, in line with broader national development objectives. However, arguments have been put forward against a sector-specific approach. For example, childhood poverty studies show concern that policymakers tend to conflate policy for children into basic services, notably health and education (Harper, 2002), rather than seeing children's rights more broadly. Such a policy critique is in danger of directing attention away from an understanding of the role that education plays in shaping children's lives, as a central part of 'the embeddedness of children within key social relationships' (p1076), with the right to education being an integral part of children's rights (see UNESCO, 2004). Even if, as some childhood poverty studies suggest, education has received considerable attention in policy debates, this has clearly not yet solved problems associated with the need for appropriate investment to ensure access of all children to schooling of appropriate quality to ensure they can escape the poverty trap.

A further rationale put forward for avoiding a sectoral approach to looking at childhood poverty is that poverty cuts across sectors, with the view that 'a sectoralised approach imposes a false structure and set of choices which conceals the complexity of poor people's livelihoods' (Devereux and Cook, 2000, in Subrahmanian, 2005). This is certainly true, but we would argue that the limited engagement of the poverty analyses with the education sector can result in a failure to understand the complexities of processes within education that could either help or hinder a poverty reduction agenda. It also fails to recognise that, in reality, policies within countries are organised on a sectoral basis. Even where there is an attempt to adopt a cross-sectoral approach, this can create problems of strategy ownership by sectoral ministries ultimately responsible for their implementation (Lucas *et al.*, 2004). Subrahmanian (2005) further suggests that there is a need for sectoral studies to recognise the trade-offs that poor people face, for example between foregoing current income in order to invest in their children's education. This is indeed important – and education policy approaches do often recognise the importance of these trade-offs, with an awareness of the subsequent implications on children's ability to attend school, and decisions that have to be made with regard to children's work as mentioned earlier. These have important policy implications, which are often addressed in some form (see Colclough *et al.*, 2003).

Whether using a sectoral or cross-sectoral approach, what is important is that these consider the implications of education reforms for the poor – in terms of both providing access to schooling of appropriate quality, as well as being of relevance to them with regard to enabling them to find an escape from poverty. At present, it appears that neither sectoral nor cross-sectoral approaches are satisfactorily achieving this.

#### *1.5.7 Policy and programme approaches to educational inclusion of the chronically poor*

As noted, strategies aimed at improving access to education of the poor are often included within both education and poverty reduction plans, even though these usually do not also consider the quality and relevance of the education obtained, or the implications of this for chronic poverty. The case studies that follow in Section 2 illustrate many of the issues and

arguments raised above. They focus on attempts to use educational measures to address chronic poverty (insofar as this is recognised in the educational literature as a specific problem) in six different country contexts: India, Brazil, Bangladesh, Colombia, Ethiopia and Malawi. The individual case studies are followed by a comparison of key elements across these country contexts. This section provides an overview of the range of interventions adopted, which will be discussed in more detail in different country contexts.

As a result of the international attention given to primary schooling in recent years, there is a general consensus of the importance of ensuring primary schooling is fee-free to facilitate access of the poor. This untargeted approach has had a significant impact on enrolment in many countries that were previously charging fees, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (see the Malawi case study). However, the rapid expansion in many education systems has raised concern about the quality of schooling, as resources have not increased concomitantly – often resulting in increased class size, insufficient numbers of trained teachers, inadequate school facilities, among other things (see UNESCO, 2005a). Even where official fees have been abolished, other costs remain that can prevent children from poor households enrolling in school (including costs of learning materials, textbooks, uniforms, parent–teacher association contributions, etc.) (Katten and Burnett, 2004).

Education-related interventions referred to in the chronic poverty literature are mainly concerned with getting children into formal schools through cash transfers, etc., with little mention of the need to address the way in which education is delivered. Within countries, as the case studies will show, programmes aimed either explicitly or implicitly at the poor include those concerned with improving access to the formal system, as well as via alternative modes of delivery aimed at specific groups of the population. Some of these also address curriculum reform – either with the aim of consolidating the curriculum to enable those with work demands, for example, to attain basic literacy or numeracy (see Bangladesh and Malawi case studies) or, less commonly, to ensure a curriculum develops ‘critical consciousness’ (see Colombia case study).

In order to prevent the transient poor from falling into chronic poverty, one approach has been to promote incentive programmes (such as cash transfers or school feeding programmes) conditioned on children attending school. This approach aims to assist the poor by ensuring that children do not have to withdraw from school in times of crisis (see case studies of India, Bangladesh and Brazil for specific detail). Incentive-based poverty reduction programmes, also known as conditional cash transfers, are social programmes targeting the interruption of intergenerational transmission of poverty (Bourguignon *et al.*, 2002; Finan, 2004). They provide poor families with an immediate incentive, in the form of a cash transfer, which, by alleviating short-term poverty, provides households with incentives to invest in their children’s education, in the expectation that this will contribute directly to the reduction of chronic poverty in the longer term (Barrientos and DeJong, 2004; Morley and Coady, 2003).

The numbers of minimum income programmes continue to grow, as initial evaluations suggest they have positive impacts on short-term poverty reduction and in upgrading education among groups excluded from the social protection system. Current programmes include: in Mexico: *Oportunidades/Progres*a; in Brazil: *Bolsa Escola*, *Bolsa Alimentação* (now amalgamated into *Bolsa Família*) and *Programa de Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil* (PETI); in Colombia: *Familias en Acción*; in Honduras: *Programa de Asignación Familiar* (PRAF); in Jamaica: Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH), in Nicaragua: *Red de Protección Social* (RPS) and in Bangladesh: previously Food for Education, now Primary Education Stipend Programme (Cardoso and Souza, 2004 – see also Brazil and Bangladesh case study).

Barrientos and DeJong (2004: 3) suggest 'it is too early to say whether programmes conditional on particular behaviour, such as children's school attendance or non-involvement in child labour, are more effective than those that simply provide cash transfers to families'. They point out that conditionality itself may have potential exclusionary effects and (ibid) the need for 'cash transfer programmes [...] which improve children's education and health to be accompanied with an extension of opportunity, such as employment and mobility, if significant and sustained poverty reduction is to be achieved'. As the following case studies illustrate, there are problematic issues in relation to how beneficiaries are identified, since conditional cash transfer programmes do not reach all the poor (see also Barrientos and DeJong, 2004), and whether the poor are retained in a programme if their poverty status changes.

School feeding programmes (see India and Ethiopia case studies) are designed to alleviate the effects of hunger poverty: they may take the form of providing a school-going child with a hot meal or a grain allowance. Like cash transfer schemes, they are conditional on attendance. While the grain allowance may benefit the whole family, the provision of a meal that aids an individual child's concentration and also provides a socialising function (for example in India, where children of different caste groups share crockery) is more targeted towards making a difference to the education of the child.

Another broad approach, such as that exemplified in the case study of Colombia, is an intervention that directly targets the quality of schools, rather than the children in them. Targeting in the Colombian case takes a spatial approach, in that it focuses on schools in rural areas where schooling quality is low and thus unlikely to impact positively on poverty alleviation. It has four components, each targeting specific aspects of educational quality (the curriculum, teacher training, community involvement and administration). The Education Guarantee Scheme in India (see case study) is a second, but rather different, example of a spatial approach. In this case, the scheme addresses the failure of the state to ensure educational access for all children. It provides schools to communities whose habitation patterns have demonstrated the inadequacy of national norms of provision of an educational facility (within 1km of a habitation) for very small children. The communities benefiting from

this intervention have tended to be those living in less accessible, hilly rural areas, typically inhabited by ST groups.

Another approach aimed at targeting those unable to access formal schooling, particularly in more remote areas, involves the provision of alternative education (also termed 'non-formal' education, and often provided by NGOs). This aims to address both supply constraints, by providing facilities in areas where government facilities are not available, as well as demand, by providing flexibility in terms of the school day and curriculum – often offering a more limited curriculum compared with formal schools, focused on basic literacy and numeracy skills in particular. This enables children to combine work with schooling. With smaller class sizes and local recruitment of teachers, these usually intend to use more participatory learning approaches compared with formal schools, with the aim of facilitating critical thinking. BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) schools in Bangladesh are the most widely known example of this form of provision (see Bangladesh case study), with replication of the BRAC model evident in a number of countries, with varying degrees of success (see Malawi case study). Alternative basic education can also be used as a strategy to target particular groups – for example street children in urban areas or, as indicated in the Ethiopia case study, nomadic groups.

## **2 Case studies of educational measures to address chronic poverty**

### **2.1 Case study 1. India: midday meals and the Education Guarantee Scheme**

India has made systematic efforts over the past five decades to alleviate poverty through measures that include increasing economic growth, targeted programmes, land and tenancy reforms, participatory and empowerment-based approaches and the provision of basic services (Mehta and Shah, 2003). While the incidence of poverty (expressed as a percentage of people below the poverty line) has consistently declined, the rate of decline has been variable and changes in methodology for data collection raise considerable doubts regarding the accuracy of poverty estimates (Mehta and Shah, 2003; Srinivasan, 2000). Chronic poverty is disproportionately high among historically marginalised groups such as SCs, STs, the elderly, women and the disabled, who suffer multiple deprivations and different, often mutually reinforcing, forms of disadvantage (Bhargava *et al.*, 2005). Mehta and Shah (2003: 502-503) report that, on average, one out of two persons belonging to SC and ST groups is poor. Whereas 31.4 percent of rural non-SC/ST households were below the poverty line, the corresponding estimates were 52 percent (ST) and 48 percent (SC), so the incidence of rural poverty was 35-40 percent greater for these groups. It was also higher among these groups in urban areas: 13 percent of non-SC/ST households experienced severe poverty, but 26 percent of SC and 20 percent of ST households were very poor. Low

levels of education or illiteracy are commonly held to be one of many factors contributing to poverty among these groups.

The pivotal focus of educational planning in India has been the (still unmet) constitutional commitment, made in 1950, to providing UPE. As the formal system expanded, certain social groups were consistently excluded from its purview: typically, these were girls in general, and both boys and girls from groups classified under the Constitution as ST, SC or OBC. A key aspect of further universalisation of primary education is improving the social inclusion of marginalised groups such as these and as such, improving social equity, rather than a focus on poverty *per se*, has been a major driver of direction setting in educational policy. Children in poverty are included by default in this focus, given that an underlying determinant of poverty is social discrimination based on caste in the case of SCs, compounded by low 'geographical capital' (Bird *et al.*, 2001) in the case of STs. However, the educational discourse of poverty is slight in comparison with that of social equity or vulnerability.

Insofar as there is mention of poverty in official documents relating to education, distinctions are not made between different types or states of poverty. The education sector section of India's current Tenth Five-year Plan, for example, states that 'The poor, rural women, disabled persons and people belonging to scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) continue to stand out as the most vulnerable sections of society' (National Planning Commission, 2002: 15). The Post-Dakar Education For All National Plan of Action notes 'a large number of children in India who are not attending school because of poverty' (Government of India, nd: 35-36). It also underlines that participation in the school system is conditioned by social discrimination which may be, but is not necessarily, linked with poverty: 'Studies have shown that in addition to social disparity, there were also economic reasons which weighed against universal participation in schooling of a large number of children, particularly girls belonging to SCs/STs and other such groups'. The current National Policy on Education (promulgated in 1986 and updated in 1992) voices similar concerns over the educational inclusion of these groups. Its updated version links families' low income with non-enrolment, non-achievement or dropping out, and identifies resource constraints as the most important reason for dropping out. It views unequal distribution of education as both a source and consequence of poverty and social exclusion and recommends incentive schemes to meet the cost of education for children below the poverty line, along with revamping the incentive delivery system so the benefits actually reach the poor.

These suggestions are taken up in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Universal Education For All, or SSA) policy and funding framework that underpins India's drive towards UPE by 2010 (see Box 3 and information available at <http://www.educationforallinindia.com/page119.html>). The SSA provides a 'wide convergent framework' for implementation of elementary education schemes and is also a programme with budgetary provision for strengthening key areas to achieve universalisation of elementary education. SSA describes itself as 'an effort to universalise elementary education by community-ownership of the school system'; a

response to 'the demand for quality basic education' and an attempt to 'provide an opportunity for improving human capabilities to all children'. The education provided should be 'useful and relevant' and another SSA goal is to 'bridge social, regional and gender gaps'. Under the SSA, targeted incentives to reduce the private cost of education include: free textbooks for girls and SC/ST students; free uniforms for the same target groups; scholarships/stipends; and the Midday Meal Scheme.

### Box 3: Objectives of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

- All children to be in schools, Education Guarantee Scheme centres, alternate schools, back-to-school camps by 2003;
- All children to complete five years of primary schooling by 2007;
- All children to complete eight years of schooling by 2010;
- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life;
- Bridge all gender and social disparities at the primary stage by 2007 and at the upper primary level by 2010; and
- Universal retention by 2010.

Source: National Planning Commission (2002).

#### 2.1.1 Hunger poverty, education and the Midday Meal Scheme

India's progress towards the MDG targets shows that it is unlikely to reduce by 2015 its very high rates of infant, under-five and maternal mortality, or to improve to the target level primary school completion rates and gender equality in education. Bajpai *et al.* (2005: 5) point out the intergenerational implications of slow progress: 'These shortfalls not only affect the lives of those presently living under harsh circumstances, but trap future generations in the cycle of poverty as well'. They also note that, although India seems likely to meet the MDG of halving extreme poverty by 2015, 'over half of its population suffers from another type of poverty—hunger' (*ibid.*). They argue (p8) that hunger poverty is more pervasive than consumption poverty in India: the proportion of people suffering from hunger was nearly double the proportion below consumption poverty in 1999-2000 (53 percent vs. 26 percent) (see also Mehta and Shah, 2003).

The implications of this argument for education of children in poverty are significant. Poor nutrition has well-known impacts on children's participation in education: children who are undernourished may suffer from poor cognitive development, which impacts negatively on schooling. Hungry children have difficulty in concentrating, may be irritable, are more prone to infection and thus to miss school – all of which lower their likelihood of attaining well (Abad, 2005).

India has had programmes of school feeding in place since the 1920s, when small experiments were carried out in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. The Midday Meal Scheme expanded in the early 1980s to cover the whole state of Tamil Nadu. Several other states also experimented with provision of food incentives to get children to enrol in schooling; provision has taken the form of cooked meals (direct benefit only to the child) or allocations

of grain (benefit extends to the whole family). In the mid-1990s, the scheme was launched nationally, in the guise of the centrally sponsored Nutritional Support to Primary Education programme, to increase enrolment, retention and attendance in primary school and simultaneously improve children's nutrition status. The scheme currently aims to cover 103 million primary school children studying in about 0.8 million schools. Under its provisions, the Food Corporation of India is directed to provide wheat/rice at the rate of 100 grams per student per day free of charge. Where a cooked school meal is not the norm, each student receives 3kg of food grains a month as long as their attendance rate is at least 80 percent.

The Midday Meal Scheme is one of seven services, which also include UPE, that make up the Basic Minimum Services (BMS) programme, which replaced the Minimum Needs Programme (MNP) in 1996. The BMS reduced the number of sectors to be covered from 12 to seven, and extended coverage into urban areas, which had not been a focus of the MNP. It is based on a notion of consumption poverty but, unlike the MNP, it also emphasises a more efficient delivery system in the specified sectors. The seven basic services it identifies for priority attention (National Planning Commission, 2002: 3.2.6) are:

- (1) 100 percent coverage of provision of safe drinking water in rural and urban areas;
- (2) 100 percent coverage of primary health service facilities in rural and urban areas;
- (3) Universalisation of primary education;
- (4) Provision of public housing assistance to all shelterless poor families;
- (5) Extension of Midday Meal Scheme in primary schools, to all rural blocks and urban slums and disadvantaged sections;
- (6) Provision of connectivity to all unconnected villages and habitations; and
- (7) Streamlining of the public distribution system with focus upon the poor.

State governments have demonstrated varying levels of commitment to implementing the scheme, which is a shared responsibility between central and state governments. In 2001, the Supreme Court of India directed all state governments that 'every child in every government and government assisted<sup>9</sup> primary schools [be provided] with a prepared midday meal with a minimum content of 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein each day of school for a minimum of 200 days'. It directed all states to introduce cooked midday meals in primary schools within six months. Four years later, several states, including the populous Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, had yet to comply (Drèze and Goyal, 2003), and the Supreme Court has intervened three times to try and ensure that the central government fulfils its share of the responsibilities for implementing its 2001 directive.

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<sup>9</sup> A government-aided/assisted school must follow certain guidelines, such as use of the state curriculum, the state-specified medium of instruction and state-qualified teachers, in order to gain financial support from the government, and funding teachers' salaries at the government payscale rate.



It is interesting to note that the common denominator of a child's eligibility for free food is enrolment in a government, government-assisted or local body school, rather than any more closely defined, poverty-related targeting – with the implicit assumption that it is these schools that serve the poorest of the poor. From October 2002, the programme was extended to children studying in Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative & Innovative Education (EGS & AIE) Centres (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Coverage of the Midday Meal Scheme 1995-2005**

	1995-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05*
<b>No. of districts</b>	378	474	506	544	544	575	582	586	596	583
<b>No. of blocks</b>	2495	4417	5565	5764	5764	5912	6844	6809	6765	6798
<b>No. of children covered (in 100 million)</b>	3.34	5.57	9.10	9.79	9.90	10.54	10.35	10.36	10.57	10.76
<b>Number of schools covered (in 10,000s)</b>	3.22	4.74	6.41	6.88	7.17	7.42	7.69	8.04	8.80	8.67

\*: Figures for 2004-05 are provisional and subject to change.

Source: <http://www.education.nic.in/htmlweb/middaymeal1.htm>.

Organisational responsibilities are left to elected officials at the village level, in order not to take up teachers' time and resources. Support staff and construction costs of kitchen sheds are paid out of the poverty alleviation scheme of the Ministry of Rural/Urban Development, under the supervision of local education committees. Where the programme has been properly implemented, the scheme appears to be instrumental in improving both school attendance, especially of girls, and retention. A survey by the Delhi Centre for Equity Studies (see [InfoChange](#), 2003; Drèze and Goyal, 2003) in 81 sample schools across the states of Chattisgarh, Rajasthan and Karnataka found that Class 1 enrolment rose by 15 percent between July 2001 and July 2002, with high improvements in female enrolment in Chattisgarh (17 percent) and Rajasthan (29 percent). Provisional enrolment data for Chattisgarh and Rajasthan, supplied by the education department, also suggested leaps in female enrolment in 2002-2003: 19 percent and 18 percent, respectively. This is a major improvement on school enrolment during the 1990s, which was about 2 percent. The report suggests that 'a bulk of the increase is likely to be a reflection of the impact of mid-day meals'. In terms of socialisation, this survey found little evidence of caste discrimination in the context of midday meals; children of all castes sat together to share meals and there were no cases of separate sitting arrangements, or of preferential treatment being given to upper-caste children. The study suggests that plenty of informal evidence supports the argument that the prospect of midday meals improves daily school attendance, not just

annual enrolment. Parents and teachers generally report that it makes it easier to send their children to school each morning, especially the younger ones; it is also now easier to retain children in school after the lunch break, since children who go home for lunch often do not return to school, especially if distances are great. Following the introduction of the scheme, 78 percent of teachers interviewed reported that afternoon attendance was roughly the same as morning attendance. Some teachers were less enthusiastic, for example where the need for them to get involved in scheme management detracted from teaching time.

The authors argue that the contribution of school meals to food security is crucial, and that they also make a critical contribution to social equity. In their analysis, school meals present a vital opportunity to promote important social goals at a relatively low cost. Midday meals help to eliminate 'classroom hunger', which leads to improved concentration and educational performance (Drèze and Goyal, 2003). Further, 'in the more deprived areas where some children do not get two square meals a day, the mid-day meal is a protection against hunger in general' (ibid: 4765). In 2003, the year of reporting, midday meals also 'helped to avert an intensification of child undernutrition in many drought-affected areas'. Poor households find the assurance of a free lunch every day for their children valuable, and Drèze and Goyal (2003) note that in tribal areas, where hunger is endemic, midday meals make a crucial contribution to food security and child nutrition. The scheme also has a positive impact on gender equity, by promoting the employment of women as cooks and helpers.

These authors are in no doubt (ibid: 4681) that while 'mid-day meal programmes have many flaws [...] the way to go is forward'. In addition to chasing recalcitrant states, they suggest seven areas for improvement: a) improved funding allocations, since once a programme is in place, additional funding will impact positively on quality; b) boosting quality by raising the quality of the infrastructure for preparation and serving the meal; c) improving the monitoring system; d) working towards enhancing the value of the scheme in relation to its socialisation value; 5) attention to the issue of Dalit (SC) cooks in areas with a conservative social outlook; 6) making the lunch menus more varied and nutritious; and 7) taking up potential for linking midday meals with related inputs such as micronutrient supplementation, health services and nutrition education (ibid).

### *2.1.2 Making schools accessible to the poor: The Education Guarantee Scheme in Madhya Pradesh*

While most states are on target to meet the MDG on poverty reduction, in others there is either little decrease in the proportion of people living below poverty line or even an increase in the absolute number of poor people. Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar and Assam are all unlikely to meet the goal. The number of poor rose in both Madhya Pradesh and Orissa between 1993-1994 and 1999-2000 (Bajpai *et al.*, 2005; Deaton and Drèze, 2002).

Madhya Pradesh pioneered in 1996 a comprehensive survey of schooling facilities (*Lok Sampark Abhiyan*) that identified many habitations that were unable to access schooling

within the regular government norms (a schooling within the village/habitation or no more than 1km away). The situation was particularly acute in the areas generally inhabited by ST communities, which are often densely forested, hilly and unconnected by road.

In 1997, Madhya Pradesh set up the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), which intended to ensure universal access to primary school throughout the state. The EGS relied on three sets of key actors: 1) the community, which was responsible for identifying its need for a school and representing this to the government; 2) the local council, which appoints and monitors locally appointed teachers and oversees the school's functioning; and 3) the state government, which grants funds for salaries, training and supplies within a three-month time period following community identification of need. The EGS used a 'demand charter', which forced the government to act within the specified timeframe, although it is not a legal framework (Gaventa and Goetz, 2001). Much higher teacher accountability than in the regular state sector (see PROBE, 1999) has been assured by the use of a contract between the teacher and the local community which draws on the notion of a social contract to decentralise accountability and decision making (Gaventa and Goetz, 2001). Within its first year, the EGS led to the emergence of some 40 primary schools *per day* in Madhya Pradesh. Between 1997 and 1998, 15,568 EGS schools were established, mostly in tribal areas. SC/ST groups made up 68 percent of their enrolment and girls accounted for about 45 percent (Sharma and Gopalakrishnan, 1998).

While there can be little doubt that the EGS models makes schooling accessible, it has raised a host of issues in relation to the possibility that it institutionalises what some perceive to be an inferior quality school to serve the poor, very many of whom are from SC/ST groups.<sup>10</sup> Quality concerns focus on the educational levels and training of the locally appointed teacher, and whether these match government-appointed teachers (although the persistent concerns over the quality of teachers in formal schools would suggest that no assumptions should be made in this respect). An area that has been anticipated to be a concern in relation to the prospect of EGS schools interrupting intergenerational transmission of poverty is the extent to which EGS-schooled children are able to transfer to higher levels of schooling in the formal sector. Madhya Pradesh has vigorously pursued institutional reform, and the need to focus such reform in part on coordinating the formal and informal education sectors has been identified (Sharma and Gopalakrishnan, 1999).

The EGS has provided a national model for community-based primary education in India. It was adopted in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in 1999 and in Orissa in 2000, and is now incorporated into the SSA framework. Under SSA, the former EGS, and a second non-formal approach formerly known as Alternative Education, both constitute what is termed Alternative Innovative Education. The SSA documentation, again, underlines the point that, like the

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<sup>10</sup> See [www.frontlineonnet.com/fl2025/stories/20031219003903400.htm](http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl2025/stories/20031219003903400.htm). The Ministry of Education (nd) also carries a commentary on the equity debate.

Midday Meal Scheme, Alternative Innovative Education under the SSA does not explicitly take poverty *per se* as a targeting indicator. It states in section 2.2: ‘The focus of this scheme would be on ensuring participation of all “out of school” children including children living in small, unserved habitations and other categories of children like working children, migrating children, street children, adolescent girls etc. who are out of school. Thus the “raison-d’être” of the scheme is to provide access to schooling for such children’ (Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, nd).

## 2.2 Case study 2. Conditional cash transfer programmes: Bolsa Escola in Brazil

### Box 4: Poverty in Brazil

In 1990, the reference year for the MDGs, 8.8 percent of Brazilians were below the poverty line; in 2000, they were 4.7 percent. For Brazil to accomplish the MDG, this percentage must drop to 4.4 percent by 2015. Poverty reduction was significant from 1994 to 1995, when inflation was defeated, but was followed by relative stagnation. The absolute number of people living in extreme poverty in Brazil is still very high – eight million or 17 million, depending on where the line is placed. Income inequality changed very little during the same period. In 1992, the poorer 20 percent of the country’s population had only 3 percent of the total national income; in 2002, this grew slightly to 4.2 percent. The richer 20 percent had 55.7 percent of the income in 1992, 55.8 percent in 1996 and 56.8 percent in 2002. In 2002, 5.2 percent of those living in the southeast of Brazil suffered extreme poverty; in the northeast the proportion was almost five times larger: 25.2 percent. In 2002, among the richer 1 percent of the population, 86 percent were white; among the poorer 10 percent, 65 percent were black or mulatto.

Source: Adapted from the Brazil Monitoring Report on the MDGs (2004): <http://www.ipea.gov.br/odm/2004%20Brazilian%20MDGs%20Report.pdf>.

### 2.2.1 Bolsa Escola in Brazil

The average incidence of poverty in Brazil, according to the national poverty line, is 30.5 percent, but the proportion of children aged 10-15 in poor households is much higher: 42 percent (Bourguignon *et al.*, 2002).<sup>11</sup> In response to national indicators of poverty, Bolsa Escola<sup>12</sup> was a demand-driven, poverty-targeted social assistance programme. It began in 1995 on the outskirts of Brasília, received a UN prize in 1996, and became a nationwide federal programme in 2001.

Bolsa Escola provided cash transfers to mothers of poor children aged from six to 15, conditioned on their children’s sustaining an 85 percent attendance rate in school

<sup>11</sup> The 2004 Brazilian Monitoring Report on the MDGs carries a useful discussion of measurement of poverty for Brazil, and the implications for achievement of the poverty MDG of different methods of calculating poverty.

<sup>12</sup> Bolsa Escola is translated by the 2004 Brazilian Monitoring Report on the MDGs (p28) as Programme of Guarantee of Minimum Income linked to Education.

(Bourguignon *et al.*, 2002; Cardoso and Souza, 2004; Finan, 2004). Schools reported attendance to municipal governments so programme beneficiaries could be monitored. By the end of 2002, Bolsa Escola had been implemented in 98 percent of the 5561 Brazilian municipalities, providing stipends to over 8.2 million children from 4.8 million families, at a cost of over US\$700 million (Finan, 2004).<sup>13</sup>

Participating families were selected based on a two-stage income means test and/or a scoring system. First, based on a needs assessment, the federal government allocated the number of federally financed stipends that a municipality could provide; then, each municipality selected which households would receive these stipends and participate in the programme. While following federal guidelines, the decentralised selection process meant that each municipality could target locally, according to its own objectives and preferences. The programme paid R\$15 per child between six and 15 years old (up to R\$45) to a family with a monthly income per capita below R\$90, which was equivalent to half a minimum wage when the law was introduced (Bourguignon *et al.*, 2002; Cardoso and Souza, 2004). Bourguignon *et al.* (2002) report that the programme covered approximately 17 percent of the whole population, reached at a cost slightly below 0.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) but that this amounts to no more than 5 percent of the income of the bottom two deciles.

In 2003, Bolsa Escola was amalgamated along with other cash transfer programmes into a single, World Bank-supported programme, the *Bolsa Família*. The Bolsa Família safety net consolidation consisted of the Bolsa Escola (Ministry of Education), *Bolsa Alimentação* (promoting health, run by the Ministry of Health), *Cartão Alimentação* (food consumption, Fome Zero), and *Auxílio Gas* (compensation for fewer government subsidies, Ministry of Mines/Energy). Each of these separate programmes had had its own administrative structure, data collection, fiduciary procedures and public reporting, so they duplicated each other, and all provided cash transfers to roughly the same target population (Lindert, 2005). In Lindert's analysis, 'the resulting "safety net" was filled with both gaps and duplications in coverage, and the programmatic fragmentation sacrificed opportunities for synergies at the family level among schooling, health, nutrition, and other services' (pp67-68).

The cash incentive approach is central to Brazil's national antipoverty campaign and a major investment in the country's future (Cardoso and Souza, 2004). By January 2005, Bolsa Família had covered 6.6 million families and accounted for about a quarter of Brazil's social safety net spending. By the end of 2006, the consolidated Bolsa Família proposes to cover

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<sup>13</sup> There are discrepancies among different accounts as to the actual numbers involved: Cardoso and Souza (2004) report, quoting 2002 Ministry of Education reports, that in 2002, 5545 municipalities (99.7 percent of all Brazilian municipalities) had joined the Bolsa Escola Federal, and that the programme provided assistance to five million children. Similarly, Finan (2004) asserts that the programme serves children aged from seven to 14, whereas Bourguignon *et al.* (2002) and Cardoso and Souza (2004) say six to 15. Bourguignon *et al.* (2002) claim that 10 million children in six million households would be covered.

11.2 million families (about 44 million people), who comprise at least two-thirds of extremely poor families (Lindert, 2005). The social investment would represent an increase from 1.1 percent to 2.5 percent of total government expenditure, and an increase from 0.2 percent to 0.5 percent of Brazil's GDP.

### *2.2.2 The implications of Bolsa Escola for future cash transfer programmes*

Cardoso and Souza (2004) found that cash transfer programmes, including the Bolsa Escola, impacted significantly on increasing school attendance, for both boys and girls. However, they did not appear to impact significantly on reducing child labour (children adjusted time in school against working/leisure times), perhaps because the cash transfers are too small to create adequate incentives for families to forgo children's contributions to the family income. Bourguignon *et al.* (2002) uncover similar findings with regard to limited impact on child labour at the same time as increasing school attendance. In their *ex ante* evaluation, they found that Bolsa Escola could increase the school enrolment rate among the poor by approximately 4.4 percentage points, and comment that 'a 50% reduction in the proportion of poor children outside school is by no means an insubstantial achievement, particularly in light of the fact that it seems to be manageable with fairly small transfers' (R\$15 per child per month) (*ibid*: 18). However, their calculations also suggest that Bolsa Escola still leaves some 4 percent of all 10-15 year olds (4.7 percent among the poor ones) outside school. They found (p23) that the proportion of children enrolling in school in response to programme availability and the degree of reduction in current poverty were sensitive to transfer amounts, but rather insensitive to the level of the means test.

Finan (2004), comparing targeting procedures across nine municipalities, found that in some of them local politicians used Bolsa Escola as a political instrument, occasionally selecting or threatening to remove families on the basis of their political support. He also uncovered incidences of blatant fraud. Levinas *et al.* (2001) claim that the majority of municipal programmes in 1998-1999 served a small fraction of the poor population and that many municipalities substituted food or cooking gas for cash payments. Bolsa Escola did not aim to guarantee that a child would finish primary education; indeed, in some cases, a family that benefited one year was forced to leave the programme in the following year to allow a different family to participate.

The implications of these accounts of Bolsa Escola and its impact are that effective targeting of the programme is crucial to its capacity to serve the poorest families (Lindert, 2005). Cardoso and Souza (2004) characterise Bolsa Escola as one of the most decentralised of all cash incentive programmes to emerge in recent years; this potentially has a positive impact on accurately targeting the poor to benefit from such programmes. If decentralisation is effective, local authorities should be better able than central government to identify the poor, which would also improve cost efficiency and enable more local accountability. However, despite the international drive towards decentralisation, the evidence that it actually delivers on these promises is mixed (Dyer and Rose, 2005): poorly regulated decentralisation can

also create the potential for rent seeking, corruption and programme capture by local elites, which may leave the poor no better off than before.

Bourguignon *et al.* (2002: 23) suggest that 'poverty reduction through this instrument, although effective, is not magical' and that, while governments may be transferring cash 'in an intelligent and efficient way', more substantial amounts need to be transferred if this approach is to impact on Brazil's high levels of deprivation. These reports suggest that focused attention needs to be paid to improving the transparency and accountability to poor communities of local government management of such schemes. In this respect, effective decentralisation and particularly improved transparency in decision making at local levels appear to be important conditions for accurate targeting of cash transfer schemes, and thus overall programme success.

Cash transfer programmes appear to have much potential to alleviate short-term poverty and provide the financial space to allow families to invest in their children's future via schooling. However, with respect to their capacity to contribute to interrupting the intergenerational transfer of poverty, they have clear limitations. As noted above, management of the programmes mirrors some of the shortcomings of processes in educational decentralisation more generally. Lindert (2005) asserts that simulations such as that of Bourguignon *et al.* (2002) suggest that the Bolsa Familia could significantly increase total educational attainment and reduce repetition rates. This assertion appears to be based on an assumption that failure to enrol in schooling, or dropping out, has only economic causes. From an educational perspective, this assumption is problematic, since the reasons that children drop out of schools are often also related to in-school factors influencing quality (UNESCO, 2005a). From this perspective, another limitation of cash transfer programmes is that, because their intention does not extend beyond facilitating the access of poor children to schooling, they can exert little influence on the quality of that schooling. Providing that cash incentives to a family remain stable (and there is clearly a need to improve this aspect of their management), the 'quality factor' (see Box 5) is likely to influence significantly the power of schools to retain poor children. With respect to envisaging, and funding, quality reforms to an extent that schools can attract all children, retain them and assure that their educational achievements are sufficient to make them competitive in the employment market, the way forward may be less clear, more costly and considerably more complex (UNESCO, 2005a).

**Box 5: Brazil's progress towards the education MDG: Quality is still an issue**

Access to education in Brazil has steadily increased. In 2002, almost all children aged seven to 10 were attending the first four grades of elementary education. However, near universal access to elementary education is not a guarantee of quality. The National Basic Schooling Evaluation System in 2001 notes that 59 percent of the pupils in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade of elementary education had not developed basic reading skills, and 52 percent were severely deficient in mathematics. Other indicators also show very high dropout rates (see Table) and poor performance at school, as well as significant regional and racial inequalities. While illiteracy among 15 to 24 year olds is dropping, it still affects more than one million people in this age group. An eight-year period of minimum compulsory schooling was established by the 1988 Constitution and regulated by the 1996 Law of Guidelines and Bases.

**Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 – 2002 (%)**

Brazil	82.7
North	74.9
Northeast	70.2
Southeast	91.4
South	91.7
Center-West	81.1

Source: Adapted from the Brazil Monitoring Report on the MDGs (2004): <http://www.ipea.gov.br/odm/2004%20Brazilian%20MDGs%20Report.pdf>.

**2.3 Case study 3. Bangladesh**

Along with various other factors, Kabeer (2005) notes that government policies towards spreading education have supported a recently observed decline in poverty. Her study illustrates that a basic level of education is needed in order to 'attain livelihood ladders and escape livelihood traps' in rural Bangladesh (2005: 42). However, estimates indicate that the decline in poverty has been relatively modest, with half the population remaining below the poverty line – some 65 million people, including 34 percent of 'hardcore poor' (Matin and Hulme, 2003). Given the significant numbers of those remaining as 'hardcore poor', Matin and Hulme (2003) suggest that improved schooling opportunities along with improvements in infant and maternal mortality have not been matched by equivalent improvements in income. This raises an important question as to why education has not had the desired and anticipated effect.

Data suggest that most children in Bangladesh have access to some form of basic education, with an increase in enrolment (together with a closing of the gender gap) noticeable over the 1990s in particular. The expansion has been achieved partly through the establishment of registered non-government primary schools, which cater for around one-quarter of those in school, with up to 10 percent in NGO schools (primarily those run by BRAC) (Chowdhury and Rose, 2005). Sources generally report high levels of gross enrolment (ranging from around 90-120 percent), with an estimated net enrolment rate of 80



percent (Ahmed, 2004).<sup>14</sup> Those most likely not to be in school are from poor households (in monetary terms), although enrolment among the poor is still relatively high for both boys and girls (Table 2).

**Table 2: Gross enrolment rates by expenditure quintile and poverty status, 2000**

	Boys	Girls	Total
Poor	82	88	85
Non-poor	100	101	101
Total	89	93	91

Source: World Bank (2002b).

### 2.3.1 Education and poverty in policies and plans

The 1973 Constitution of Bangladesh committed the state to provide ‘a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such a stage as may be determined by law’ (Article 17, cited in Unterhalter *et al.*, 2003). The Constitution emphasises the importance of encouraging girls to participate, and also to reach out to the poor, disadvantaged and handicapped. This remains the basis for subsequent legislation and policies (Government of Bangladesh, 2003). Just before the 1990 World Conference on EFA, a Compulsory Education Act declared the government’s intention to make primary schooling compulsory in certain parts of the country unless there was a valid reason (such as work) preventing children from attending (Unterhalter *et al.*, 2003).<sup>15</sup> Its intention to achieve EFA by 2000 (a date which has since been extended) was also declared.

As in other countries experiencing rapid expansion of primary schooling, improvements in access are observed to have been achieved at the expense of quality (see, for example, CAMPE, 2000; see also Malawi case study). Quality is thus the particular focus of the second Primary Education Development Plan (PEDPII), which expresses the government’s view that education is ‘a vital tool for poverty alleviation, employment generation, production and development, and building a dignified and self-reliant nation’ (Government of Bangladesh, 2003: 2). The plan intends to ensure that ‘the enhanced level of education and literacy achieved should be a significant factor in breaking the cycle of poverty in the rural areas of Bangladesh’ (p102). The intended route out of poverty is through improving access of the poor to improved quality schooling, which is anticipated to enhance employment and income-earning opportunities, enabling poorer children to enhance their family’s income. It is

<sup>14</sup> Gross enrolment rates are calculated as the total number of children enrolled in school divided by the official school-aged population for a particular level of education. Where children above or below the official school age are enrolled, the gross enrolment rate may exceed 100 percent. The net enrolment rate includes only those children enrolled in school within the official school-aged population.

<sup>15</sup> Many countries have still not introduced compulsory primary schooling, in recognition of the fact that they cannot compel children to go to school where facilities are unavailable/inadequate.

also proposed that education and literacy can help the poor escape from 'ignorance' by helping them overcome vulnerability to exploitation, creating more equitable access to social facilities and giving the marginalised, particularly women, a voice in community affairs. The PEDPII is firmly rooted in the EFA approach and also refers explicitly to the MDGs. It explicitly claims to be 'pro-poor', and draws attention to reviews of the state of poverty as part of the PRSP process, which noted the contribution made by poor quality education (p5). Both the PRSP and PEDPII view human poverty in broad terms, using indicators of deprivation in health, education and nutrition as part of their definition.

Concern for children living in poverty is included in PEDPII under considerations for 'equity and inclusive education', and directly linked with working children, noting that 'children living in extreme poverty are especially vulnerable to exploitation in the labour market' (p13). The plan notes the challenge of creating flexibility in the formal system to allow access to 'these very disadvantaged children'. Other equity issues discussed include gender, tribal and religious minorities, disabled children and refugee children. A key intervention aimed at poorest families is the primary education stipend programme, providing financial support to overcome direct and opportunity costs to reach the 40 percent poorest children.<sup>16</sup> In addition, support of food or dietary supplement programmes, with matching community funding, are proposed for children in areas where seasonal or prolonged hunger is a barrier to schooling. A strategy for a fund to provide 'innovation grants' is proposed, to enhance quality education for working children and those living in poverty, and to encourage and allow communities to develop adaptive strategies for flexible schooling. Other interventions recognise the need to support 'disadvantaged children of less educated parents' to do their homework (p76).

### 2.3.2 *Strategies*

#### 2.3.2.1 **NGO provision**

While NGOs were involved in dialogue related to the development of the PEDPII and their influence is recognisable with respect to the emphasis on flexibility of provision in the plan, their proposals for including non-formal primary education within the plan were not taken into account, even though this plays an important role in providing access to those underserved by the government system. Perhaps indicative of the peripheral role that government perceives non-formal primary education (NFPE) as playing in the education sector, PEDPII does not include plans for this, despite its importance for reaching hard-to-reach populations (Chowdhury and Rose, 2005).

NGO provision in Bangladesh is targeted at hard-to-reach areas of the population, with a particular focus on girls, and is usually designed specifically to be pro-poor. The vast majority of NGOs registered with the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE – an umbrella

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<sup>16</sup> There is also a Female Secondary School Stipend Programme, although this is not included in PEDPII given its focus on primary schooling (see Mahmud, 2003).

association of NGOs working within education) run other programmes along with education – most commonly microfinance (only five specialise in education alone) (CAMPE, 2004). According to CAMPE (2004), an estimated 1.3 million or more children are enrolled in these programmes (about 7 percent of total enrolment at the primary level). As the programmes usually comprise the first four grades, a greater proportion of children will be following NGO programmes at that stage. The BRAC primary education programme is the largest of these, starting in 1985 and including two-thirds of those enrolled in NGO NFPE programmes. In addition, BRAC subcontracts to smaller, local NGOs (Chowdhury and Rose, 2005).

Most local NGO programmes are funded directly by external donors. It has been suggested that one of the motivations of NGO involvement in NFPE is related to a small (but growing) educated urban elite with a strong commitment to modern education for the masses for instrumental reasons (i.e. to transform behaviour and attitudes of the poor in ways that are likely to have broader benefits) (Hossain *et al.*, 2002). This is of particular significance given evidence in Bangladesh that indicates that the poor and poorest rely on patron–client ties to avoid destitution and survive, even though this is recognised as being disempowering (Blair, 2005). Reliance on elites to provide NFPE through NGOs is likely to reinforce this dependency. This is further influenced by reliance on low-paid, locally recruited para-professionals for the provision of NFPE (see below).

Children in NFPE programmes have been found to perform better, on average, in basic competencies than their counterparts in formal schools (CAMPE, 1999). Part of their success is attributed to providing learning centres close to homes, local community involvement in management of the centres and recruiting teachers (mainly female) locally. These teachers are often under-qualified (and receive considerably lower salaries than teachers in government schools). Teachers in centres run by larger NGOs such as BRAC receive ongoing training and close monitoring by the NGO, which provides the opportunity of piloting innovative approaches. They also benefit from small class size, as no more than 30 students comprise one cohort – a luxury that government schools cannot afford as it is achieved through the low salaries of teachers involved in NFPE programmes. It is often claimed that NGO programmes are more cost effective than government provision, although the full costs of the programme (including training and monitoring) are often not known. BRAC has its own research and evaluation department, which keeps a close track on the progress of programmes and has carried out a number of studies to assess their performance (see for example, Chowdhury *et al.*, 2002; Nath 2002; Nath *et al.*, 1999). These indicate, for example, that transfer between NGO programmes and formal schooling has been occurring for larger NGOs such as BRAC, so students could transfer from BRAC centres to formal secondary schools (with over 90 percent of students reported to transfer from its programmes to the formal system), but not for some smaller NGOs. BRAC's success owes partly to its size and influence, which have enabled it to build a relatively strong relationship with the government, allowing for transfer to take place on an informal basis. Even so, students from BRAC centres often face problems once they enrol owing to the different style of teaching in the

formal sector, resulting in children dropping out – although dropout is also associated with other non-school-related constraints, including food insecurity of households, for example (Nath, 2002).

#### 2.3.2.2 Food/cash transfers

In 1993, a Food for Education (FFE) programme was established, covering 40 percent of children in selected 'backward' rural areas, with the aim of compensating for opportunity costs of child work and so improving enrolment and reducing school dropout. In total, 13 percent of children enrolled in school were benefiting under the programme (Galasso and Ravillion, 2004). It involved a two-stage targeting process – first, targeting by the centre across geographical areas, and second, targeting of beneficiaries by local communities.

Children from poor families were targeted by land ownership, parents' occupation, etc. from economically 'backward' unions, identified on the basis of a set of criteria. Selected families received 15kg of wheat or 12kg of rice per month for sending one child to school, or 20kg of wheat or 16kg of rice per month for sending two children to school (ADB, 2003). The evidence indicated that those in the bottom quintile were five times more likely to benefit from the FFE programme compared with the richest, and that it increased the probability of attendance by 20 percent (World Bank, 2003b). This suggests that those intended as beneficiaries were significantly more likely to benefit, although there were some errors of targeting. Evaluations of the programme generally indicate positive outcomes in terms of improving access: the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) found a statistically significant enrolment gain for girls (31 percent) and boys (27 percent) (Ahmed and del Ninno, 2002). Similarly, a World Bank report indicates that FFE raised enrolment and attendance rates by 21 percent for every 100kgs of food grains per year that the households received. However, another study found that targeting of the poor was most problematic in communities where inequalities in land ownership within villages was evident, resulting in the poor having less decision-making power (Galasso and Ravillion, 2004).

However, the scheme came under criticism on the grounds of mismanagement and corruption. The World Bank (2003b) estimates that 75 percent of food appears not to have reached households. Teachers were spending a great deal of their time in procuring wheat from the food *godowns*, storing them and maintaining records of distribution. From the moment that the wheat was received, there were opportunities for corrupt practices to seep in. The World Bank concluded that leakage was higher and targeting lower than other social safety net programmes, and that cash-based programmes could be preferable as they tend to have lower leakage and handling costs (*ibid*).

Nearly a decade after the adoption of the FFE programme, the government introduced the Primary Education Stipend Programme (PESP) as a pilot, in an attempt to address some of the difficulties in administering the programme. In 2004, the government replaced both the FFE and the pilot PESP by a larger PESP. This intends to target 40 percent of poor

households, which are paid Tk.100 (US\$1.70) per month for one child and Tk.125 (US\$2.20) per month for more than one child. The stipend is paid into an account in a designated bank for the mother or, in her absence, the father or the legal guardian. The underlying philosophy behind the programme is that the financial grant will supplement the income of those poor families for which the children would otherwise be a source of income. Families targeted under the FFE and PESP include those headed by poor widows, day labourer and low-income professionals including fishermen, blacksmith, cobblers, weavers, etc. and the landless (with maximum land of 0.5 acres). Schools are selected on the basis that:

- At least 10 percent of the students of the school have appeared in the scholarship examination for selection to secondary school.
- The school holds the examinations in an orderly manner and the eligible students have appeared in all the examinations, unless there was an acceptable reason.
- There is regular school attendance – during inspection on any normal day, not affected by inclement weather. If it is found that the attendance rate is below 60 percent, the school will be suspended from being a part of the programme. The programme will restart on production of evidence of satisfactory performance.
- In the case of madrassahs (Islamic schools) teaching the government curriculum, there has to be minimum of 100 students.

In order to identify those eligible, the school management committees of selected schools are expected to identify 40 percent of the poorest students, and then obtain the approval of the *upazilla* (sub-district) education officer. Every year, the committees will identify poor students in Class 1 along with the number of family members. In order to obtain the stipend, the student must have an attendance record of at least 85 percent and have received at least an average of 40 percent marks in the annual examination of Class 2 upward. If a stipend is cancelled, the next household in order of priority will be awarded the stipend.

The PESP in Bangladesh is a relatively rare example of a low-income country financing a cash transfer programme through its national budget (see Barrientos and DeJong, 2004). There are clearly trade-offs in allocating scarce resources in this way. Indeed, the CAMPE's view of the stipend programme is that the money would be better allocated to improving the quality of schooling (including through reducing class size), rather than providing incentives. It points out among the reasons for the success of NGO programmes are their flexibility and the fact that they have better attendance than government schools, even though they are not providing stipends. CAMPE suggests that government schools could learn lessons from this (Chowdhury and Rose, 2005). However, students in NGO programmes usually receive pencils and stationery free (unlike in government schools), so have other forms of incentive. Interestingly, an important aspect of the World Bank's new 'Reaching Out of School Children' programme is the provision of stipends to children enrolled in NGO programmes. This has only just started and its impact is not yet known.

The two approaches adopted within Bangladesh to address access of the poor, either through stipends for attendance in formal primary schools or via alternative provision, both appear to have been successful in extending access to those otherwise underserved – with the latter also seeming to have a positive effect on learning, in terms of literacy and numeracy. However, opportunities beyond attendance in either formal or non-formal schooling are less evident – particularly given difficulties apparent in transition to higher levels within the education system for those attending non-formal programmes. The implications of improved access in both these cases for future opportunities, and so possibilities of influencing chronic poverty, require further attention.

## 2.4 Case study 4. Escuela Nueva: a response to rural poverty?

### 2.4.1 *The Colombian poverty context for Escuela Nueva*

During the time of the establishment and expansion of the Escuela Nueva programme in Colombia, the country's poverty declined steadily – from an estimated 50 percent of the population in 1964 to 19 percent in 1992. Despite this improvement in the overall poverty picture, striking disparities in income, wealth and living standards between regions and socioeconomic groups remained (McEwan and Benveniste, 2001). A 1992 estimate suggested that more than six million Colombians had below subsistence level incomes, and three out of four of these poor people lived in rural areas. The rural poor were poorer than the urban poor, with an average income that was 43.3 percent below the subsistence level, compared with a 31.3 percent deficit for the urban poor. The overall quality and efficiency of public education at both primary and secondary levels were extremely poor, and this most seriously affected students from the lowest income quintiles (<http://wbIn0018.worldbank.org>). Poverty relates to the kind of education available to students, since low-income families mostly use government schools, whose educational quality is low (Kline, 2000b).

Before Escuela Nueva was introduced, most rural children were educated in multi-grade schools – where some 40 students between Grades 1 and 5 would be educated in single classrooms by one or two teachers, in a teacher- rather than child-centred approach (McEwan, 1998). Schools failed to reflect rural lives, either in their curricula or in their timings; teacher turnover was high and so was student dropout. While rural multi-grade schools comprised some 70 percent of Colombia's schools (Colbert *et al.*, 1990), their particular needs had not been visible to educational planners. In 1983, before EN expanded, just 20 percent of rural students completed primary school in five years; 35 percent of rural students dropped out in the first grade; and, in 1985, 23.8 percent of Colombian children did not attend school (Kline, 2000b). These schools' inability to provide good teaching contributed to early educational failure, and thus perpetuated the poverty cycle, rather than breaking it (Navarro, 2002).

### 2.4.2 *Escuela Nueva*

The Escuela Nueva (EN), or New School, programme was established in 1975 in response to 'persistent problems in rural education' (Colbert *et al.*, 1990). With the objective of providing quality and complete primary education to children in rural areas, EN started with two assumptions: a) that innovation for children requires changes in teacher education, in administrative structures and in community relations; and b) that it should have the capacity eventually to go to scale (*ibid.*). The programme included four components: curriculum, training, administration and community. It focused from the outset on developing mechanisms that are replicable and decentralised and technically, politically and financially viable.

The *curriculum* package includes study guides for children, a school library with basic reference materials, activity or learning centres and the organisation of a school council. Designed to promote active and reflective learning, the study guides promote active learning, discussion, group decision making and the development of skills that can be applied within the environment. They sequence a series of objectives and activities that should be followed at the student's pace, and so allow for flexible promotion. This model accommodates the temporary absences from school that would normally jeopardise children's chances of continuing their education. The study guides allow for local adaptations to the core national curriculum and, used by groups of three children, help teachers manage multi-grade teaching more effectively.

The *teacher training* component promotes teachers in developing a facilitating rather than didactic role; encourages a positive attitude towards new ways of working in rural education; accepts a teacher's leading role in the community; and fosters a positive attitude towards support and administrative agents. These skills and attitudes are developed via a series of four basic workshops, one for administrative staff and three for teachers, over a year. Each workshop is followed by a monthly teacher meeting to exchange ideas, analyse problems and discuss results. The teacher training approach itself models the learning approach proposed for children, and materials follow a similar methodological pattern and process to the children's study guides.

The *administration* component aims to help administrators develop a supportive rather than controlling role. It aims to develop staff abilities to guide the application of the EN methodology; to follow up programme implementation with teachers in the classroom; and to modify their traditional role so they become an immediate resource person for teachers in the learning process.

The *community* component encourages increased parent and community involvement in school activities. Teachers and community members prepare a community map, a family information register, a calendar of agricultural events and various social and cultural monographs to increase the knowledge of the community.

In 1976, with financial support from the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and USAID, and recognition from the Colombian Ministry of Education, the EN programme was implemented in 500 primary schools throughout rural Colombia. A key EN innovator was also transferred into the Ministry of Education to support EN's sustainability and expansion. By 1982, EN had been introduced in 2000 schools. Between 1982 and 1986, supported by a World Bank loan, it was institutionalised under the Ministry of Education as the national strategy to universalise primary education in rural education in Colombia (Colbert *et al.*, 1990).

#### 2.4.3 *Scaling up and replicability*

The extent to which the original reform was retained in Colombia after the major expansion funded by the World Bank is questioned both by the Colombian government and by commentators (e.g. McEwan, 1998; McGinn, 1996; Psacharopoulos *et al.*, 1993). Great variations in the components of the EN model were attributed by the government to a lack of communication and coordination from the national level, reductions in the specified teacher training inputs and failure to deliver the learning materials to schools (Republic of Colombia, 1990, cited in Kline, 2000a). The flexibility of the components became fixed during expansion, thus compromising the flexibility and responsiveness of EN. McEwan (1992, cited in Kline, 2000b) found that, three years after the expansion, only 33-45 percent of EN schools were using the learning guides, not all of them had a library and it was sometimes difficult for teachers being trained to find model schools to visit (McGinn, 1996). However, evaluators also found that basic principles were still honoured: active learning and group work did characterise the 'new schools', and efforts were being made to develop students' creativity and abilities to express themselves in writing and in speaking. In general, however, scaling up and centralisation of the management of EN compromised the capacity of the reform to make the marked impact on classrooms that it had before.

EN has since been replicated in Guatemala (<http://www1.worldbank.org>), Panama, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Salvador, Honduras, Guyana, and the Philippines, and also within Colombia, with urban and displaced populations. Evaluations of the Guatemalan experience of *Nueva Escuela Unitaria* (NEU) (Baessa *et al.*, 1996 cited in Kline, 2000b; Chesterfield and Rubio, 1996) found that NEU schools retained significantly more students and that they achieved at a higher level in mathematics and reading. Active pedagogy contributed to emotional growth, participatory behaviour and group work; teachers were better skilled and more confident in multigrade classroom contexts; and parental satisfaction was higher, since children were achieving better and also behaving better at home. In future, bilingual versions of the NEU materials would need to be developed and the school day extended beyond two hours.

However, reflecting the position at the outset – that the EN programme has its roots in concerns over the quality of schooling for the rural poor rather than a pronounced poverty focus *per se*, there is no indication from its evaluations as to the impact the schooling provided to children is having on their poverty status.



## 2.5 Case study 5. Ethiopia: planning education for poverty reduction through school feeding and alternative service delivery?

Ethiopia is commonly identified as one of the poorest countries in the world – being in the unenviable position of 170 out of 177 on the Human Development Index, with a GDP per capita of just US\$97 (UNDP, 2005). Evidence on recent poverty trends in Ethiopia varies, partly depending on the definition and measure of poverty adopted. While it is generally acknowledged that the extent of poverty in Ethiopia is severe, some studies suggest that a recent decline in the incidence of poverty is evident (Dercon and Krishnan, 1998 and World Bank, 1999, cited in Devereux, 2000). However, findings based on qualitative research contradict this (Dessaegn and Aklilu, 1999). It is also disputed because it does not take variations across the country into account (notably in chronically food-insecure highland areas). In these areas, qualitative and unofficial evidence indicates that vast numbers of households are worse off and more vulnerable than previously. Of particular concern, the findings of an in-depth study of the Northeast Highlands indicate that the proportion of destitute households has increased threefold over the past 10 years, and vulnerable households have increased in number even more dramatically. This implies that the proportion of households considered to have viable livelihoods has declined, also suggesting that support for the destitute by better-off households in terms of providing employment opportunities, for example, is also diminishing (Sharp *et al.*, 2003). According to this study, approximately 15 percent of households were identified as destitute, with 55 percent classified as vulnerable and only 30 percent considered to have viable livelihoods.<sup>17</sup>

Vulnerability is reinforced by HIV and AIDS, which is having a serious impact in Ethiopia as in other sub-Saharan African countries – with an estimated one in 13 adults infected, and as many as one in six in urban areas (FDRE 2002b; USAID, 2002; US Census Bureau, 2000). HIV/AIDS is likely to influence patterns of educational opportunities: 200,000 children under 15 are estimated to have been living with HIV/AIDS in 2001 (USAID, 2002); many more are affected by illness or death of family members. Estimates vary but indicate approximately one million HIV/AIDS orphans, the highest number in absolute terms in any country after India and South Africa (Walta, 2001, cited in Admassie, 2003). Studies in Ethiopia indicate that children who live with both parents are significantly more likely to attend school and complete, and educated women in a neighbourhood increases the probability of children enrolling (Weir, 2000a; Weir and Knight, 1996), implying that HIV and AIDS could have an adverse effect on children's schooling, which could in turn influence opportunities of future

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<sup>17</sup> The definition of destitution used for this study was 'a state of extreme poverty that results from the pursuit of "unsustainable livelihoods" meaning that a series of livelihood shocks and/or negative trends or processes erodes the asset base of already poor and vulnerable households until they are no longer able to meet their *minimum subsistence needs*, they lack access to *key productive assets* needed to escape from poverty, and they become *dependent* on public and/or private transfers' (Devereux, 2000: 2).

generations in these households. However, there is limited information on this in Ethiopia, and none on the intergenerational aspects.

As noted, children's work is potentially both a symptom and a cause of chronic poverty. In Ethiopia, almost all children participate in household and farm work by the age of 10 (Admassie, 2003) but only 1 percent in rural Ethiopia work outside of the household for wages or in-kind payment. In urban areas (particularly Addis Ababa), a large proportion of children are occupied in paid work – with the largest proportion (over one-quarter) employed as domestic workers (CSA, 2001b). Furthermore, a large proportion of these workers are female (22 percent of girls are domestic workers, compared with 2 percent of boys, although boys in urban areas are involved in other forms of paid work). According to one study, Ethiopia has the highest incidence of child work in the world (42 percent of full-time productive labour participation) (Cockburn, 2002).

### *2.5.1 Schooling for the poor*

A marked improvement in overall primary enrolment rates is evident in recent years, starting from a very low level in the early 1990s, when only around one-quarter of primary school-aged children were in school. By 2002, it is estimated that the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) had reached 75 percent for boys and 54 percent for girls (similar to the targets set for that year). Despite this, a considerable number of children remain out of school, some of whom have never been enrolled at all. Based on Ministry of Education (2002) data, in 2001/02, it is estimated that 5.1 million of seven to 14 year olds remain out of school, 63 percent of whom are girls. Those out of school are most likely to reside in rural areas, with near universal enrolment in urban areas. Of particular concern is continued low enrolment in two regions that are predominantly pastoralist – Afar and Somali – where a mere 7 percent and 4 percent, respectively, of primary school-aged children in rural areas are enrolled (WMS data, cited in Dercon, 2000).

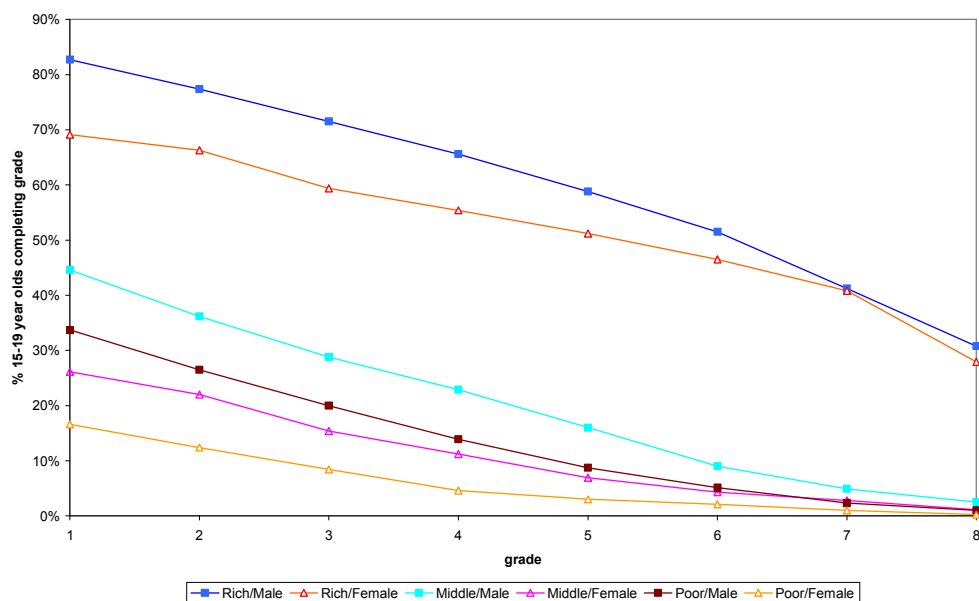
Overall, 44 percent of males and 62 percent of females in the 15-19 year age group have never attended school at all and very few have completed six grades of primary schooling (Filmer, 2003). Children from asset-poor households are considerably less likely to enrol in school compared with better-off households (Figure 2).<sup>18</sup> This highlights a need to expand education programmes considerably for young people and adults to ensure that the current generation of the economically active population has the opportunity to receive an education. This is important for their own livelihoods, as well as those of their family, particularly given the evidence that parental education is likely to have an important influence on the possibility of their own children attending school, with anticipated longer-term benefits (Rose and Al-Samarrai, 2001). Educated parents and guardians in Ethiopia have been found to be more

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<sup>18</sup> The figures for the 'poor' are estimated based on ownership of assets (for example, radio, mattress etc.), without identification of the chronically poor.

likely, for example, to send children to school at a younger age (Weir, 2000b), which in turn helps to ensure that they complete their primary schooling (particularly girls, who are likely to drop out by the time they reach puberty (Rose and Al-Samarrai, 2001). Despite the importance of parental education, adult education is an area neglected within Ethiopian education plans.

**Figure 2: Primary school grade completed, 15-19 year olds, 2000**



Source: Demographic and household survey data (Filmer, 2003).

Primary school fees were abolished in the 1990s; despite recent increases in enrolment, fee abolition has not had as great an impact on schooling opportunities as in other sub-Saharan African countries (for example, see Malawi case study. See also UNESCO, 2002). The challenge for Ethiopia was considerably greater, given the initial low enrolment rate, but other direct costs persist – the cost of clothing for school has been found to be the most inhibiting school expense, for example (Kuawab, 1996; USAID, 1994; Weir and Knight, 1996). Some studies also indicate that work demands have become a more important reason for children being out of school than financial concerns (Admassie 2003; Cockburn, 2002; CSA, 2001b).

Since hunger and insufficient food are often mentioned as reasons for children not enrolling in school in Ethiopia (see, for example, USAID, 1994), it might be expected that children with lower nutritional status would be more likely to be out of school. However, one study has found the opposite to be the case for boys in a rural area of Ethiopia. The explanation for this given by members of the community was that, while boys tended to work on farms where coffee was grown, those who were not healthy enough to undertake such physical work attended school (which was seen as a recreational activity) instead (Rose and Al-Samarrai, 2001). Both studies suggest that those from households whose basic needs are not being

met and, therefore, likely to be classified as chronically poor, are unexpectedly attending school.

Poverty in Ethiopia is closely associated with food insecurity. Short-term shocks as a result of severe drought can have long-term effects on children's schooling. The drought in 2000 meant many rural schools in the south and southeast of Ethiopia were forced to close when large numbers of students failed to attend. Contributing to the high dropout level was the existing poverty of parents, many of whom were using their last resources to survive and could no longer afford to meet the costs of sending their children to school. In addition, families migrated away from their home areas in search of relief assistance.

### *2.5.2 Education and poverty in policies and plans*

Following on from the 1994 Education and Training Policy (TGE, 1994), the overall objective of Ethiopia's Education Sector Development Plans I and II (ESDPI and ESDPII, 1997 and 2002 – FDRE, 1997; 2002a) relates to producing good citizens and nation building. This is reiterated in the 2002 Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Paper (SDPRP – FDRE, 2002b). Particular attention is paid in these plans to overcoming geographical and gender inequities in enrolment, with concern for the quality and relevance of schooling. Poverty alleviation is mentioned specifically in ESDPII with respect to the promotion of non-formal education. The plan cites research (unreferenced) that 'proves' a farmer with at least four to five years of primary education is more productive than someone who remains illiterate, which in turn can contribute to a decline in poverty. It also notes that attitudinal changes in nutrition, health, family planning, etc. as a result of four to five years of schooling can help to alleviate 'non-income poverty' (FDRE, 2002a: 19). This helps to justify the fact that the majority of those in school are currently enrolled in the first four-year cycle, with significant problems of dropout evident as children reach the second cycle. The implications of education for intergenerational poverty are not mentioned explicitly in the plan. As such, there is no consideration of the longer-term benefits of this amount of schooling.

In line with international development goals, the Education and Training Policy (TGE, 1994) aims for UPE by 2015. ESDPI and ESDPII include interim targets towards this, with concerns for addressing equity evident in specific targets for gender parity and underserved regions. These recognise that some regions of the country, notably Afar and Somali, which are predominantly pastoralist, are 'underserved' by the education system, with differential enrolment targets set for these areas. Thus, targeting of the poor is occurring in part through a geographical focus, although the goals are so modest as to suggest that little attention is being given to overcome the problems. It is noteworthy that, at the time of the development of ESDPI, no donor activities were reported in Somali, and only the World Food Programme (WFP) was working in Afar (World Bank, 1998). Despite proposals made in ESDPI, government initiatives to address the issue of low enrolment in pastoralist areas have remained sparse (see also Dyer, 2006).

In order to achieve enrolment targets and provide access to out-of-school children, school feeding programmes have been promoted in particular areas of the country suffering from severe food insecurity. In addition, alternative basic education provided by NGOs is predominantly seen as a strategy to reach out-of-school children in more remote and pastoralist areas of the country, as well as working urban-based children.

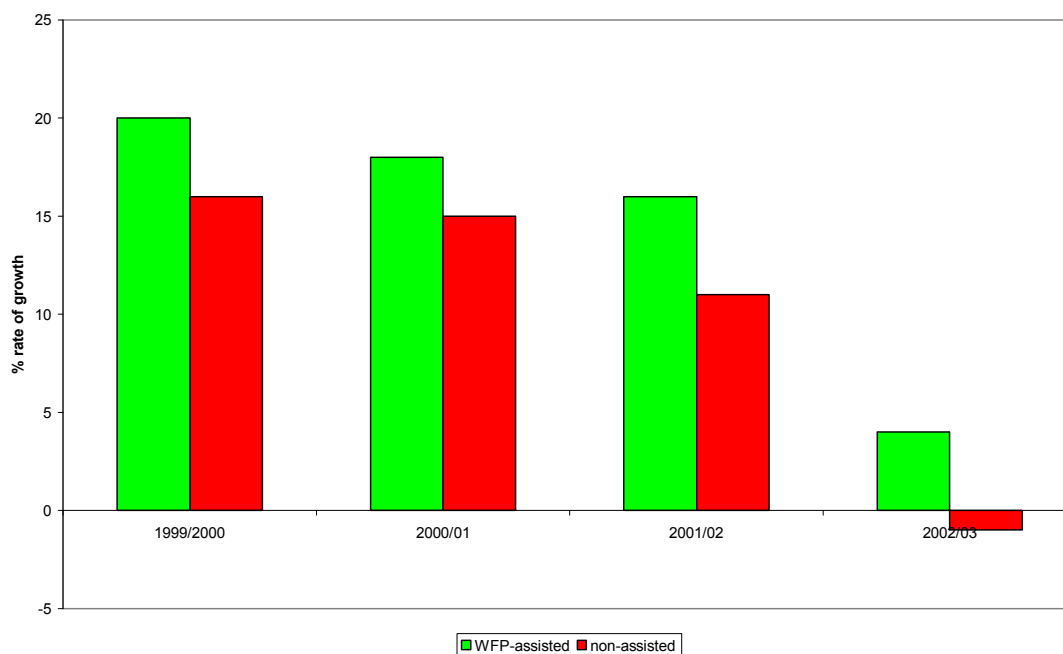
### 2.5.3 School feeding programmes

According to ESDPII, 'to improve access, stabilize attendance, reduce dropout rates and alleviate short term hunger so that children can attend classes attentively, school feeding program shall continue and be expanded in areas where there is serious shortage of food and that the feeding program will actually serve as incentive to go to school' (FDRE, 2002a: 24). School feeding programmes have been undertaken in Ethiopia by the WFP in partnership with the government since 1994, targeted at 'chronically vulnerable' areas – notably in Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, Somali and Afar. They covers 85 *woredas* (districts) in 19 zones and around 600 primary schools, with 286,000 pupils benefiting from the school feeding programme, around 42 percent of whom are girls (WFP, 2003). Woredas select the schools, giving priority to rural primary schools. In addition, a girls' initiative has been implemented in Oromia and Afar, with girls being given a take-home ration of oil at the end of each term, benefiting over 14,000 school girls (WFP, 2003).

The evidence indicates that growth in enrolment in WFP-assisted schools has been higher than in comparable schools in the zones, and the growth in girls' enrolment has been particularly large. Over time, the rate of growth of enrolment in WFP-assisted schools appears to have been declining, but this is likely in part to the low starting point (Figure 3).<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, while drought affected enrolment negatively in 2002/03 in food insecure areas with a 1 percent fall in enrolment, enrolment in WFP-assisted schools continued to grow by 4 percent (7 percent for girls and 2 percent for boys). While some of this growth might be accounted for by the fact that some children move to attend the WFP-assisted schools and 'drop out' of a non WFP-assisted school, it does appear that school feeding has been a motivating factor for children's school attendance. In addition, there has been a larger proportionate increase in girls' enrolment, suggesting that targeted interventions are helping to narrow the gender gap, although their enrolment remains below that of boys (WFP, 2003).

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<sup>19</sup> Information on enrolment rates in these areas is not provided in the document, so it is not possible to know how many boys and girls remain out of school despite the school feeding programme.

**Figure 3: Percentage growth rate of enrolment in WFP and non-WFP schools**

Source: WFP (2003).

The WFP programme in Ethiopia is generally seen as successful in getting children into school. School feeding is enabling households to make longer-term investments through education than might otherwise have been the case. It also relieves the pressure on children who otherwise would need to work in order to feed themselves and other family members (WFP, 2002). The sentiments of Wzro Argash, a mother in the Amhara region, illustrates views expressed by other parents and children: 'We were not aware of the value of education earlier, that was why we were very angry when the school commenced with providing biscuits. The biscuits made many children refuse their household's obligations and run away to school. But now we are indebted to the assistance given and are willing to send all our children, even the small ones to school. The school feeding shares our responsibility of feeding children and makes their lives better than ours' (WFP, 2002).

However, supplies of food can be unpredictable where school feeding programmes operate as a form of safety net during times of drought. Evidence indicates that commitment to schooling is not necessarily sustained once the school feeding is removed. In Afar, for example, teachers reported that children come to school in great numbers when the WFP is providing biscuits and porridge, but become empty when the food supply stops (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2002). Concern is also raised about the effect on local agriculture, where food for the programmes is being imported (although this most often occurs in the context of food scarcity).

Overall, school feeding has had an important impact on schooling opportunities in areas where it is operating and a positive impact on nutritional status which, in turn improves

academic performance. The evidence suggests that school feeding is not used as a substitute for meals at home, as the nutritional status of those receiving school feeding is higher than those in school with no school feeding (Sharp et al., 2003). The WFP is also aware of the importance to coordinate with other initiatives, including the WHO vaccine and de-worming programmes and UNICEF's latrine and water programmes so that they cover the same regions and schools (although this could increase disparities between schools as some are neglected as a result).

While the programme is of great benefit to a number of children who otherwise might not be in school particularly owing to food insecurity, its coverage accounts for four percent of children in school. The total unit cost of provision (145 Birr) is substantially higher than the existing government recurrent unit cost at the primary level of 95 Birr, of which just 10 Birr is allocated to non-salary recurrent expenditure (MOE, 2003; World Bank, 2003a). If school feeding is to be expanded significantly, both to currently enrolled as well as out-of-school children in food insecure areas, as envisaged in ESDPII, the costs are likely to be considerable. The high unit cost suggests it is unlikely that this would be feasible, implying that it would continue to be limited to a small number of children while many more remain out of school, unless alternative strategies are adopted to reduce the costs of the programme.

As school feeding is currently made possible by external support, the programme is vulnerable to changes in WFP funding. For example, there has been a threat of cutting the WFP budget by 50 percent, more than halving of the number of beneficiaries (to 110,000 children, and 10,962 girls receiving cooking oil to take home) under the programme in 2002-2006. Although an attempt was made to obtain resources from the WFP emergency budget, this is likely to be a short-term solution. Thus, while ESDPII envisages expanding the programme, it does not appear that resources will be available unless alternative sources are found. The high costs cannot be met by the Ministry of Education, which does not have a budget for this, and there is no intention in ESDPII for the Ministry to take on responsibility for school feeding. In addition, the school feeding programme already relies heavily on the involvement of local communities and parents in providing water, storage and human resources for running the programme at the school level – estimating the value of in-kind resources suggests that one-third of the overall costs of the programme are derived from community contributions. It would be unrealistic to expect these to increase significantly.

Although school feeding can be seen as an important strategy for the chronically poor, in terms of both improving nutritional status and increasing access to school in Ethiopia, it is reliant on the resources available from the WFP or other external agencies, raising concerns regarding scaling-up in the way implied by ESDPII, as well as sustainability of existing coverage, which has already been temperamental.

#### 2.5.4 *Alternative basic education*

One of objectives of the 1994 Education and Training Policy (TGE, 1994) was to make available special and non-formal education in line with the needs and capability of the country, and also to promote relevant and appropriate education training through formal and non-formal programmes. ESDPI indicated the intention that non-formal education would provide a second chance to school dropouts and those youths and adults who had never had the opportunity to attend school, and that children out of school would benefit from an opportunity to become literate through non-formal education. However, ESDPI did not give much attention to developing strategies related to this. By contrast, alternative basic education programmes (particularly those offered by NGOs) are considered to play an important role in ESDPII.

Non-formal systems currently in operation resemble the BRAC model (see Bangladesh case study), offering a three-year cycle, which is considered equivalent to the four-year formal system. Although there are variations between different alternative basic education programmes, they share common objectives of increasing enrolment, promoting the participation of girls and reducing dropouts (Anbesu *et al.*, 2002; MOE, 2000). Attempts are being made to ensure that the non-formal system links into the second cycle of primary schooling, and some regions have begun to accept those who complete the three-year cycle into Grade 5 of formal schools. However, it is estimated that only 11 percent of five to 17 year olds who are receiving some form of education are enrolled in non-formal programmes. The proportion is considerably higher in rural than urban areas (14 percent compared with 5 percent of those enrolled in education in each of the areas). In rural areas a significantly higher proportion of males who are enrolled are in non-formal programmes (17 percent) compared with females (7 percent), despite the attention these programmes pay to encouraging girls' education (CSA, 2001a).

Despite the perceived importance of alternative basic education to reach out-of-school children in ESDPII, it receives only around a 1 percent share of the government education budget. The opportunity for alternative basic education to expand sufficiently to reach the vast number of children who remain out of school as intended in the ESDPII is, therefore, dependent on NGOs, which currently are the main providers. While NGOs were more or less invisible in ESDPI, they are seen to play an important role in ESDPII. This marks a notable change in relationship between the government and NGOs over the past decade: NGOs were barred by the Derg (military government council) until 1991, then tolerated by necessity as a result of the need for international relief. Since 1991, there has been considerable improvement in the relationship, with a significant increase in the number of international and national NGOs operating in the country. There has also been a general shift in focus on NGOs from a relief agenda (with understandable concerns of fostering dependency), to a longer-term development agenda (including around 30 registered to work in education and skills training). In line with the government's view of NGOs, most NGOs see themselves as working to support the state system, not as a substitute.



An important reason for the promotion of the role of NGOs is related to the resources they are expected to provide. The Amhara ESDPII (2002) notes, for example, that the expansion of non-formal education depends on increasing involvement of NGOs, private firms and the community, and that this is anticipated to reduce the burden on public expenditure. It states that the government is expected to participate only in areas of strategy and programme development, monitoring and evaluation and curriculum development. It recognises that this might result in different resources available in different areas, because of variations in living standards and uneven distribution of NGOs in the region. This raises critical concerns regarding possibilities of widening disparities within the region. Similarly, the plan of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR) region also emphasises resource mobilisation from NGOs, suggesting that they should provide 35 percent of the total resources needed to finance the region's education plan (SNNPR, 2002). On the one hand, NGOs consider that their direct involvement in providing alternative basic education programmes will be phased out, changing to the provision of technical support. On the other hand, regions rely on the contribution of resources from NGO programmes, without which it is doubtful whether the programmes would be able to continue.

Whether programmes offered by NGOs can expand to other parts of the country where out-of-school children reside remains an important question. One aspect of this question relates to the availability of resources for their expansion. Currently, NGOs are predominantly supported by international donor agencies, as well as fundraising initiatives such as Comic Relief. Channelling donor funds through NGOs requires consideration of the effect on government access to donor resources, as a trade-off in the use of donor resources for government-run programmes versus NGO programmes is likely to occur. In addition, where government resources are distributed to regions based on block grants, with money brought into a region by an NGO subtracted from the grant, regions have been reluctant to support NGO activities, since this limits the availability of resources over which they have control (Miller-Grandvaux *et al.*, 2002).

Alternative delivery approaches can be particularly important for children involved primarily in work, given the need for education to be flexible around the other demands on their time. A recent report focusing on children employed as domestic workers in Addis Ababa finds that children aged between eight and 15 years old involved in these activities work for an average of 15 hours per day (Kifle, 2002). The main reason these children entered domestic work was that their family was destitute or had disintegrated (including as a result of death of parents). Of a sample of 100 domestic workers interviewed (84 percent female), 65 percent were enrolled in some form of education – however, none of these were enrolled in formal schooling. While 26 percent of those enrolled were in day non-formal schooling, the vast majority were registered in afternoon/evening non-formal schooling run by NGOs. However, these children suffer from being tired when attending their classes, as well as not having any time to do homework, and are often late or absent. It is not, therefore, apparent whether this education has positive longer-term effects, enabling themselves and their offspring to engage

in more productive activities in the future. For those not enrolled in any type of education, the main reasons are that they have no time or cannot afford it, rather than because of a lack of supply.

Low enrolment in pastoralist areas, notably Afar and Somali regions, owes to a large extent to lack of available and appropriate provision. According to a recent study, an important reason for low enrolment in these areas is related to the fact that the existing education offered does not respond adequately to the pastoralist way of life, with little attempt to adapt the curriculum to their environment and experience. Despite the move towards use of local languages for instruction, textbooks were found to be available only in Amharic and English in Afar, for example (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2002). Conditions are also particularly harsh for teachers in pastoralist areas, especially those that have been affected by severe drought. Teachers posted to these areas suffer constraints of long distances to schools and markets and problems of transport. Despite an additional allowance provided for teachers working in these areas, difficult conditions contribute to a rapid turnover of teachers, with problems in replacing teachers who leave (MOE, 2003d). Where facilities have been made available, it is reported that permanent and expensive school buildings have been built in some areas where there are no water or health facilities and no 'permanent' settlement of pastoralists (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2002). This creates problems for schooling, as well as meaning that conditions are not attractive for teachers, contributing to their rapid turnover. Despite support for mobile schools in ESDPII, this issue continues to be an area for hot debate at the level of local government (*ibid*); moreover, merely making schools mobile does not address broader problems of curricular relevance (Dyer, 2006).

Overall, Ethiopia remains both one of the poorest and most educationally disadvantaged countries in the world. Significant efforts have been made to address this, with notable improvements in schooling opportunities in recent years, both within the formal system and with regards to access to alternative provision. The implications of this for the lifecourse of children and for future generations, in terms of both educational opportunities and escape from the poverty trap, have so far received insufficient attention.

## **2.6 Case study 6. Malawi: planning education for poverty reduction through abolition of fees and community schooling?**

### ***2.6.1 Schooling and poverty: Free Primary Education***

According to the 1998 Integrated Household Survey (IHS), an estimated 65 percent of the population in Malawi is living in poverty (NEC, 2000).<sup>20</sup> Many households face chronic food

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<sup>20</sup> The poverty line, developed by the IHS, is the level of welfare distinguishing poor households from non-poor households, taking into account per capita daily calorie requirements and a certain level of basic non-food requirements (see NEC, 2000).

shortages and, as coping with food insecurity is their main priority, education ranks low on the list of their immediate needs and priorities (Khaila *et al.*, 1999).

The introduction of the Free Primary Education programme (FPE) in 1994 resulted in a massive expansion: enrolment increased by over 50 percent between 1993/94 and 1994/95 (from approximately 1.9 million to nearly three million) and UPE was attained for the first time. Furthermore, large number of children re-entered school, resulting in pupils as old as 18 years old in Standard 1. However, the abrupt increase in enrolments led to an increased number of children using existing facilities more intensively, resulting in a substantial increase in class size, particularly in early standards (with additional challenges owing to the wide age range of pupils in these classes), and more classes being taught in the open air. Government recruitment of approximately 18,000 untrained teachers was insufficient to provide classes of an acceptable size; another outcome was that, by 1997, over half of teachers were not qualified compared with 16 percent in 1993/94 (Kunje, 2002; MOE, 1994; 1997). As a result, the number of pupils per qualified teacher has risen dramatically following FPE, from 88:1 to 119:1.

Lower standards have been most affected by low levels of resources, since the examination orientation of the system emphasises higher standards. This contributes to high repetition and dropout in the early years of schooling (Chimombo, 1999; Kadzamira and Chibwana, 2000; Kadzamira and Kunje, 1996) and is particularly detrimental for students from poorer households in rural areas, who are often more likely to drop out early and thus only experience schooling of such poor quality they may not even attain basic literacy and numeracy skills. Despite the jump in enrolment, only one-quarter of those who initially enrol complete the primary cycle; little attention has been paid to other constraints, keeping those for whom fees were only part of the problem out of school (Kadzamira and Rose, 2003).

**Table 3: Primary gross and net enrolment rates by income quintiles and gender**

	Gross enrolment ratio				Net enrolment ratio			
	1990/91		1997		1990/91		1997	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
I – Poorest	65	51	115	106	34	31	70	72
II	83	69	125	111	50	45	75	75
III	88	83	124	116	52	57	76	78
IV	104	89	127	117	66	61	78	79
V – Richest	113	106	124	115	76	75	81	79
All	86	75	123	112	52	50	76	76

Source: Al-Samarrai and Zaman (2002); Castro-Leal (1996).

From 1994, resources to primary schooling increased to meet the challenges but remained insufficient. In addition, the increased demand for secondary schooling as more primary graduates passed through the system has had an adverse effect on quality: the vast majority

of teachers in community day secondary schools are trained to teach at the primary level, and classes take place in converted primary school classrooms lacking necessary facilities (Kadzamira and Rose, 2003).

### *2.6.2 Education and poverty in policies and plans*

A World Bank-supported Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) was drawn up following the first democratic elections in 1994. Among the causes of poverty, the PAP's policy framework identified low enrolment owing to lack of school fees and limited facilities, and poor quality owing to inadequate resources and inappropriate curricula (MEPD, 1995). Increasing access to quality, relevant and efficient education has since been an important focus of government policy and resources, in the expectation that basic education would contribute to poverty alleviation, and especially 'improved agricultural productivity and better prospects of employment, reduced infant and maternal mortality, lower incidence of diseases and fertility rate' (ibid: 24).

Within the education sector, the goal of UPE was mentioned as an explicit objective for the first time in Malawi's second education development plan (1985-1995) (Kadzamira and Rose, 2003). Access, equity, quality and relevance of primary schooling remain priorities in the 2000 Policy Investment Framework (PIF – MOE, 2000). Poverty is not, however, mentioned directly within the policies and strategies. Rather, these focus on those 'underprivileged within the conventional school system', with target groups to include orphans (especially those whose parents have died of HIV/AIDS; children with special educational needs; girls; and out-of-school youth). The PIF is not specific about *how* these target groups will be reached, although its broad strategic approach appears to see the problem as low awareness of the benefits of schooling, rather than other constraints associated with the forms of disadvantage they face. Even though the 2005 Education Sector Plan, providing an implementation strategy for the PIF, intends to establish non-formal education centres for overage students and school dropouts based on a three-year cycle combining basic and vocational education, involving NGOs in the provision, the PIF mentions neither the role of NGOs nor non-formal education.<sup>21</sup>

The PIF proposes to revise the primary school curriculum to make the primary cycle terminal (i.e. seeing the primary cycle as a complete package, without the expectation that children will necessarily continue to higher levels), and place less emphasis on selection to post-primary. While this might be important in terms of addressing immediate poverty alleviation goals by focusing resources on ensuring that all children obtain minimum levels of basic literacy and numeracy, most households do not see the benefit of primary education alone. Secondary education is considered necessary for economic and social benefits to be realised – with the expansion of primary schooling, secondary education has now become

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<sup>21</sup> This section derives from Kadzamira and Rose (2003).

the minimum qualification for entry into the formal job market. A recent study finds that most communities in both urban and rural areas realise this, and identifies lack of secondary schools and/or poor selection to secondary as one of the priority problems in their areas (Khaila *et al.*, 1999). But very few children from poor households are likely to get the chance to attend a secondary school.

### *2.6.3 Addressing primary school access through abolition of primary school fees*

Malawi has a mixed history with respect to charging of primary school fees. Experiments in the mid-1980s with increasing fees immediately resulted in a massive decline in primary enrolment in Standard 1 (Rose, 2003a). The more recent approach to addressing poverty through the education sector has, in contrast, relied heavily on fee abolition. Initially, targeted attempts at abolishing primary fees, occurring before the 1994 elections, had limited impact. These included a phased abolition of tuition fees in Standard 1 in 1991/92 with the aim of gradually abolishing fees for the first four years of primary schooling, and the introduction of a school fee waiver programme for non-repeating girls in Standards 2-8 from 1992/93, sponsored by the USAID Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) programme. The girls' fee waiver programme is reported to have met with some resistance from parents who did not understand why girls should get preferential treatment, although the controversy it created succeeded in placing the issue of girls' education, as well as fees more generally, high on the government's agenda (Wolf, 1995).

During the 1994 elections, the promise of the abolition of primary school fees as a means of increasing access to education was high on the agenda of most political parties and appears to have played a significant part in securing electoral victory. By contrast, attention to other issues, such as food security, would be less visible, and their attainment more elusive. Once in power, the FPE pledge was immediately fulfilled. Chimombo (1999: 117) notes that FPE 'was not only a response by the newly elected leaders to the popular demand for education from the electorate but was also perceived as the main instrument for a more egalitarian society, for expanding and modernising the economy, and as an essential element in the development process'. The main objectives of FPE were to increase access, eliminate inequalities in participation between groups and sensitise the community to the importance of education.

Untargeted fee abolition in 1994 had a significantly greater impact on enrolment than targeted attempts, suggesting that the success of fee abolition was related partly to optimism around the changing political and economic environment, and possibly also the impact of other reforms taking place in the education sector at the same time (such as non-enforcement of uniforms, which also had the possibility of substantially reducing household direct costs on education). While successful in allowing schooling opportunities to children previously excluded from school for financial reasons, it certainly has not solved the problem of access. Even after the fee abolition, estimates indicate that around 13 percent of the total expenditure of poorest households goes on primary schooling – not an insignificant amount,

given the other basic needs they have to meet (Rose, 2003a). These costs almost double for children in higher classes, when more stationery and better quality clothing is required. The relatively high proportion spent by poorest households is likely to be at the expense of other basic needs of the household, and a cause for children dropping out, given that short-term costs of non-attendance in school have a less serious immediate impact compared with the costs of not attending to food and health needs, for example.

Current dropout rates indicate that only half of all children who start school are expected to reach Standard 3, and less than one-fifth will complete the primary cycle, with fewer girls than boys completing (Kadzamira and Rose, 2003). This suggests that, although the vast majority of the school-aged population has access to primary schooling, many households are not able to sustain their initial demand for education for a variety of reasons, often related to poverty. While school fees were earlier a constraining factor on school attendance, these were compounded by other direct and indirect costs; since FPE, inadequate clothing and lack of money to buy school supplies remain important reasons for non-enrolment (Burchfield and Kadzamira, 1996; Chimombo, 1999; Kadzamira and Chibwana, 2000; Rose, 2003a). Government supply of exercise books and writing materials is often insufficient, so households have to supplement it; despite fee abolition, schools continue to request contributions for sports, water bills, etc., as well as labour and materials for school construction and maintenance – additional costs which can be prohibitive for poorer households (Rose, 2003a). This suggests that educational policies have been unsuccessful in providing for the poorest, who continue to be underserved by the education system.

Moreover, although children might initially enrol in school, they are sometimes withdrawn because their labour is needed by the household. Child work can be an important aspect of a poor household's coping strategy in Malawi, particularly in relation to *ganyu* (casual labour that is often seasonal and usually is undertaken on a piece rate basis) in rural areas and street vending in urban areas (Devereux, 1999); these activities are often not compatible with schooling (Kadzamira and Chibwana, 2000). Children, particularly girls, may be needed to substitute for the domestic work of adults in the household to allow them to undertake income-generating activities, a trend that has become more severe as HIV/AIDS often means that girls are required to look after sick relatives, and take on roles of childcare and other domestic chores following the death of a parent (Kadzamira and Ndalama, 1997).

Early pregnancy is often cited as a reason for girls dropping out of school, although little is known about the magnitude of the problem. Pregnancy of school girls and early marriage are, however, often also related to poverty, as girls seek material support from boyfriends or husbands which their parents are unable to provide (Burchfield and Kadzamira, 1996; Davison and Kanyuka, 1990; Kadzamira and Chibwana, 2000; Khaila *et al.*, 1999). Thus, non-economic factors can also be a constraining factor for some, although they are often interlinked with poverty-related factors, and disproportionately affect girls.

The abolition of fees has, therefore, provided an incomplete solution. Unlike before, the limited exposure of most children to formal schooling could mean that they are more likely to demand schooling for their own children. Yet, the schooling children from poor households receive is unlikely to change significantly their own livelihood opportunities, owing partly to the poor quality of education which might, in turn, put them off investing in the education of their offspring if they do not recognise the benefits (such a trend has been evident in Tanzania, for example, as a result of declining quality – see Peasgood *et al.*, 1994).

**Box 6: Summary of implications of fee abolition on poverty in practice**

<p><b>Access</b> Pro-poor Massive increase in primary enrolment after 1994 FPE, but poorest still most likely not to be in school, and continued low survival rates, particularly for poorest and girls</p> <p><b>Quality</b> Anti-poor Large numbers of untrained teachers, large class size and limited facilities, particularly for lower classes, with resources concentrated at the upper level where the poorest are less likely to be enrolled Increase in years of schooling required to achieve basic literacy and numeracy</p> <p><b>Relevance</b> Anti-poor Qualification inflation: Mass primary education, so need secondary to benefit Suitability of academic vs. vocational curriculum in schools Wide age range in lower classes Appropriateness of vernacular, national or international language of instruction</p> <p><b>Fit</b> Anti-poor Schooling conflicts with child work, placing demands on girls and the poorest in particular</p>
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Source: Kadzamira and Rose (2003).

#### 2.6.4 Community schooling

Both the PRSP and PIF support international trends towards advocacy for local ownership and participation of the poor, emphasising conditions needed to enable the poor to support themselves out of poverty. This is not a response to local demand but rather is promoted in a top-down fashion by international agencies (Ellis *et al.*, 2003; Rose, 2003b). The potential for ownership and participation to be effective is constrained by a relatively weak civil society (Jenkins and Tsoka, 2004; Kadzamira and Kunje, 2002), which limits the possibility of voices at the local level being expressed and heard.

In government schools, school committee structures created in response to policy commitments in the 1990s to facilitate the process of community involvement in decision making are, in practice, often ineffective and weak (Rose, 2003b). Community members are expected to provide monetary and non-monetary contributions to schools without having any role in deciding how these contributions should be used. Alongside advocacy for community participation in government schools, and after fee abolition, NGOs have piloted two models of community schools, with the specific aim of reaching areas underserved by the government system. These include the Village-based Schools (VBS) programme, piloted by Save the Children-US, with financial support from USAID, and the Community Schools

programme, piloted by Save the Children-UK, with financial support from DFID. Both cater for enrolment in Standards 1-4 in remote, underserved areas. The schools receive external financial and technical support which often exceeds the resources available in government-assisted schools. The community is expected to take responsibility for school construction and maintenance, as well as to be involved in school governance. Most of the projects are a programmatically sensitive response to the need for community involvement in school policy, with the potential of encouraging community identification of locally recruited instructors and the promotion of locally relevant curriculum, for example. However, these projects have challenged the government by raising a problem of coordination with national policy, highlighting an issue regarding the extent to which such innovative projects can be mainstreamed and integrated into the formal public system of schooling. In addition, they are targeted at the poorest, underserved areas of the country, with emphasis on community involvement, potentially placing a heavy burden on the scarce resources available in the poorest and most disadvantaged areas.

VBSs were established in Mangochi, a district characterised by low enrolment rates, with 51 percent of school-aged children out of school at the beginning of 1994 and high dropout rates and illiteracy levels among the adult population. The main objective was to pilot strategies for increasing access, especially of girls and younger children, by establishing junior community primary schools covering Standards 1-4 in communities where there were no schools and long distances to school were a major constraint on enrolment. To do this, several innovative strategies were introduced, drawing on the experience of the BRAC non-formal education programme in Bangladesh (see Bangladesh case study). Most of these were a departure from the Ministry's norms and standards. For example, teachers were selected from the community by community members and special efforts were made to recruit female teachers to serve as role models for girls, with the result that their qualifications were often below the government criteria, some teachers having just reached Standard 8. In addition, the curriculum was adapted to concentrate on four core subjects of Chichewa, English, mathematics and general studies and the other subjects (music, physical education and creative arts) were integrated into the core subjects. This was done in order to reduce curriculum overload, and so increase the likelihood that children would acquire literacy and numeracy skills in a shorter period of time.

There is evidence to indicate that the VBSs were of better quality than government schools, achieving higher tests results, and the quality of teaching was reported to be more participatory and interactive (Hyde *et al.*, 1996). Three evaluation studies on the VBSs, which compared the performance of pupils from VBSs with those from government schools, found that VBS pupils performed significantly better in mathematics, English and Chichewa (Dowd 1997; Hyde *et al.*, 1996; Miske and Dowd, 1998). As a result, the first VBS evaluation reported that some parents actually transferred their pupils from government schools to VBSs because of their perceived better quality (Hyde *et al.*, 1996).



School committees were set up to help in the running and management of the schools and were seen as a link between the school and community. Unlike school committees in government schools, they were provided with training on their roles and responsibilities by SCF-US. SCF-US saw community roles as provision of school structures, choice of school committee for management of school, choice of teachers, monthly meetings on school life of the child, discipline of teachers with regard to punctuality and performance, discipline of students, monitoring of absenteeism and dropouts and timetabling (Dowd, 1997). Communities and school committees from the VBSs performed more diverse roles than the mostly dysfunctional school committees and communities in government schools; they were more involved in school governance and monitoring teacher and pupil performance, particularly in relation to attendance and discipline, which impacted positively on the retention of girls in particular (ibid). In some VBSs, teachers used community members as resource persons to teach areas where they had more competence and skill, such as music and art and craft. While more effective than government school committees, other aspects of community involvement did not differ significantly from the norm of community and parental involvement, being largely confined to contributing labour during school development.

It was always the intention that SCF-US would establish the VBSs, but that these would then be handed over to the government within a few years. However, the possibility of them operating as intended under government control was adversely affected by the centralised nature of the education system, making it difficult to introduce innovative changes at a local level (Bernbaum, 1998). Government insistence on standards led to the abandonment of the programme, which did not extend beyond a pilot. All schools established as part of the programme were handed over to the state, as originally intended. However, the Ministry took over the recruitment of teachers to these schools, and most of the innovations were not followed up by government. The VBSs are now run along similar lines to government schools, facing similar problems, including shortage of teachers and lack of supervision and support. Overall, experience of the VBS programme highlights problems where government regulation stifles NGO innovation and experimentation, which could otherwise offer opportunities to those excluded from education (Kadzamira and Rose, 2005).

Further, given the explicit focus on poorest communities in the VBS programme, whose members are often struggling to survive, concerns of equity arise where responsibilities are passed from government to these poorest communities, without a proper analysis of whether they are able and/or willing to provide the support demanded. In practice, the evidence from VBS indicates that, while SCF-US was involved in supporting the programme, communities were actively participating but, as that support withdrew, community support was not sustained. This indicates that community management requires sustained external facilitation and support and, even then, could be seen as a burden for poor communities. Sustainability might have been assured by the programme's intention of involving local NGOs, but a lack of local NGOs with the interest and competence in service delivery meant that this was not possible. Once SCF-US withdrew, communities were left to their own devices. Thus, even

though the VBSs showed similar signs of success to BRAC schools, unlike in Bangladesh, the conditions under which they were established have not enabled them to flourish, and so the programme did not extend beyond a pilot.

Overall, attention to education and poverty in Malawi has mainly been addressed through an untargeted approach of fee abolition. Given the significant impact this has had on enrolment, there is a view in some government circles that this has solved the problem of access for the poor. However, not only has it become apparent that large numbers of children are not able to complete the primary cycle, but also questions are raised about the quality and relevance of their learning.

### **3 Comparison of issues across selected case study countries and ways forward**

These case studies illustrate a range of measures that countries have adopted to try and address problematic issues related to the demand of the poorest for schooling. In some countries, concern for addressing the needs of the poor is more explicit in policies and plans than in others. However, even where this is an explicit concern, it is most often related to increasing access to primary schooling and, even then, does not always clearly articulate how constraints to access are being addressed.

As the case studies have also illustrated, targeting of the poorest remains an inexact science. These cases illustrate wide variations, from the undifferentiated approach, which targets the schools where it is presumed that the poorest are enrolled, as in India; to the pinpointed approach, which requires means testing and eligibility of individual households, as in the Colombian experience. Decentralisation may contribute to more accurate targeting, but this should not be assumed, since it can also increase the politicisation of targeting, making it less, rather than more, accountable to the poor.

As an untargeted approach, fee abolition has clearly had many positive impacts in terms of lifting barriers for some people in poverty to enrol in schools. While this is a major step forward, the studies of Malawi and Ethiopia illustrate that there remain several connected financial issues (expenditure on uniforms, for example) as well as demands on child work that are unaddressed. The massive increases in enrolment have, in turn, had negative knock-on effects in terms of quality, such as sharp rises in class size and declines in teacher qualifications, both with implications for teaching approaches. In India, in contrast, there have been no fees for generations, but problems in enrolling the children of the very poor persist. This suggests that, while abolition of fees is necessary, it is not a sufficient precondition and, as UNESCO (2005a) notes, quality matters.

Conditional cash transfers appear to be having an important impact on encouraging families to send children to school, as is illustrated in the cases of Brazil and Bangladesh. However,

the emphasis of evaluations of these schemes has focused largely on the enrolment of children, and to a more limited extent their educational attainments; the question of the impact schooling actually has on employment and the longer-term alleviation of poverty, and its function in interrupting intergenerational transfers, is not answered by studies that focus on these issues without taking a broader and more contextualised view (which, as we noted earlier, is not a particular strength of educational research more widely). If they are found to show these benefits, questions remain in relation to how they can be implemented in a sustainable way in countries whose education systems are heavily dependent on external resources (including the sub-Saharan African countries included here), and whether this is the most appropriate use of the resources, given trade-offs with more general quality improvements, for example.

School feeding (cooked school meals) and food for education (grains for the family) have been identified as successful strategies in enrolling and retaining children in the case studies of India, Bangladesh and Ethiopia. They address the problem of getting children into schools, and helping families forgo opportunity costs of school attendance, at the same time as improving their nutritional status, and in this respect are important. However, such schemes are, in effect, limited in that they do not address the quality of the schooling that children receive, and again raise concerns of sustainability.

In many countries, the state has been unable to extend educational opportunities to all children. Characteristically, the 'hard to reach' educationally are also among the poorest. NGO provision of alternative education programmes in 'hard to reach' areas allows those previously denied access to engage in some form of education. On the evidence about education provided by BRAC in Bangladesh and VBS in Malawi, for example, the performance of children learning in alternative basic education environments where facilitators do not have formal teacher training qualifications can outstrip that of children learning in lower primary schools where teachers are normally trained. EN schools, similarly, seem to fare no worse than existing government schools and indeed, importantly, appear to be successful in developing and encouraging a more holistic approach to education, with their concomitant potential to empower children.

While this provision, in these respects, can make all the difference for some children, it raises several concerns. Experience in Malawi suggests that transfer of the BRAC model can create problems where political commitment is lacking. Moreover, many issues remain in relation to the possibilities for such children of transferring into the formal secondary sector to continue with their education. At this point, dropout may be considerable, either because there is no further provision, or because, where there is, children who have become accustomed to a more individual-focused educational approach than that which characterises much government provision, particularly where pupil-teacher ratios remain very high, may discontinue attendance. If the majority of these children's education experience is limited by both pedagogical and structural issues of this kind, then the longer-

term benefits of receiving at best the lower primary cycle of education deserves attention. It should also not be overlooked that NGO provision, while it may indeed deliver better quality learning processes than conventional provision, is unlikely to offer equivalence in relation to the currency of the qualifications (if any) it provides for competition in the employment marketplace. In this respect, a state-run alternative programme, such as the Colombia EN or the EGS scheme in India, may perhaps have greater potential.

Because education sectors are seriously underfunded, governments have increasingly turned to the use of 'para' teachers: local people (often women), perhaps selected by the immediate community, who work for a lower wage than formally trained teachers. The justification for their appointment is generally that they are more sensitive and committed than non-local qualified teachers – and, indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that, where their training is addressed (as by BRAC and the original EN model) through 'on-the-job' in-service opportunities, they perform their pedagogical functions at least as well as 'qualified' teachers, and may well do much better at validating and empowering poor and disadvantaged children through educational processes. This suggests that, while this approach to alternative education via the state has evident potential for children in poverty, careful attention must be given to quality aspects and, in the longer term, to addressing the fundamentally inequitable strategy of a two-tiered payment system for people working as teachers.

The case studies reveal that, while education is generally seen as a right in constitutions, that right has not been assured for all children. Policies and plans recognise that education has played a part in both creating and sustaining crosscutting disparities (by region, gender, caste, race) and for these reasons is part of the definition of poverty. They also recognise, with differing degrees of explicitness, that education is part of the solution for poverty – although there is little detailed clarity of how this relationship actually works in practice. Again, with differences in the extent to which these definitions are actually articulated, poverty itself is seen in broad terms, rather than simply income poverty. Thus, strategies aimed at the poor are often associated with social equity rather than poverty in a more narrowly defined sense.

In terms of policy strategies and programmes, educational policy tends to disaggregate the 'poor' into groups such as 'hard-to-reach', street children, (AIDS) orphans, pastoralists, working children and so on. As educational enrolments and systems have expanded exponentially where fees have recently been abolished, there is an increasing emphasis on ensuring educational access to children otherwise excluded. While enrolling all children has long been a policy aim, policy communities have often been slow to recognise that there is a relationship between the quality of that supply and the demand for it. In other words, the deficit does not necessarily lie with a lack of demand for education as policy communities have often supposed, but rather with a lack of demand for poor quality education that does not appear to reflect the lifestyle or aspirations of user groups, particularly when an

investment in education has, for the poor, very high or prohibitive opportunity costs. The current emphasis on improving the quality of supply, to ensure that the schooling provided is of appropriate quality and relevance, is a major challenge. It is, however, clearly essential to see the effectiveness of education as a tool by which to combat the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

There are, evidently, limitations in the focus of the educational research and evaluation communities. Programmes such as those reviewed in the case studies are usually evaluated in relation to internal, programme-specific achievements in school. They rarely venture to make links between these internal aspects, or 'internal efficiency', and the later applications of what is learned during education in life beyond school. Making this link in future evaluations and research, and understanding in much greater detail what the relationships look like, and what their dynamics are, will again be critical to targeting educational innovations more sensitively to the needs of the poor.

Greater attention also needs to be paid, within the school environment itself, to ensuring schooling provided can support intergenerational mobility, in terms of the implications of both the official and the hidden curriculum, the role of teachers, the involvement of communities in different aspects of schooling processes and so on. There is, for example, very limited experience of curriculum reform directly aimed at overcoming chronic poverty, or explicit tackling of the hidden curriculum from the perspective of poverty and/or chronic poverty.

Whether particular education programmes can help to break the intergenerational poverty cycle will depend partly on which aspects of education are required for this purpose. If basic literacy and numeracy are enough, NGO-provided non-formal primary schooling might be adequate. However, we suggest that such provision does not provide adequate 'capital' in terms of not only qualifications but also learning the language of power that derives from successful completion of socially sanctioned, high currency formal education (almost regardless of its quality).

And if formal schooling is the way forward, is primary schooling enough? The evidence suggesting that five years of primary schooling makes a difference is widely quoted, but not as robust as its mention in much agency and national literature (e.g. in the Malawi and Ethiopia case studies) would seem to indicate. If intergenerational transmission of poverty, in the reasonably near future, can be tackled only through access to secondary schooling, there is considerably further to go than the MDG goals, which themselves seem remarkably ambitious, would suggest. In order to gain a better understanding of these issues, there is an immediate need for further research that forges the links, which on the present evidence are all too rarely found, between the specialised knowledges within the two fields of education and poverty.

### 3.1 Policy lessons

This concluding section draws out some of the policy lessons from this review of the literature on chronic poverty and education.

#### 3.1.1 *Knowledge and discourse around the relationship between chronic poverty and education*

- Despite general acknowledgement that education, particularly of girls, 'is a central means to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty' (Birdsall *et al*, 2005: 26), there is insufficient understanding of the processes through which education influences poverty.
- This insufficient understanding is particularly acute for the intergenerational transmission of poverty and should be considered a research priority.
- Understanding who is chronically poor in the context of education is complicated by education being included as part of the definition of chronic poverty as well as part of the solution.
- In general, educational research identifies those excluded from school for a range of reasons (often related to poverty, even if this is not the explicit focus), including, for example, by class, gender, caste, race, disability, linguistic groups, nomadic groups, etc. These forms of exclusion may also influence their learning, even where children are able to gain access, owing to the 'hidden curriculum'.
- There has been extremely limited connection between the virtually separate discourses of education and of chronic poverty. These need urgently to be brought together to inform policy.
- The poverty discourse reflects considerable recent advances in poverty conceptualisation, but its recognition of the role of education is often narrowly based on human capital approaches (even where these are increasingly technically sophisticated in their approach). There is a need, therefore, for chronic poverty theorists to go beyond viewing education solely in human capital terms, and to recognise that a comparable version of their dynamic and multidimensional approach to the notion of 'poverty' can, should be and elsewhere already is, applied to education.
- Education research recognises the multidimensional, crosscutting political, economic and social processes that exclude children from enrolling, attending, participating and achieving in school. It is also concerned with different learning outcomes (in terms of not just knowledge and skills, but also critical thinking and values that can contribute to self-esteem, a sense of control, etc.) It demonstrates, however, a limited concern

with how children apply the knowledge, skills and understandings they gain at school in their lives after schooling and an equally limited engagement with poverty debates.

- Even according to conventional approaches to investigating the schooling–poverty relationship, the relationship between education and economic growth is found to vary considerably across African economies (e.g. Appleton *et al.*, 2003 on Ghana, Uganda and South Africa), suggesting other factors are also at play, and that education might have a more limited effect in conditions of stagnant agricultural economies than is conventionally perceived.
- Economic evidence on the links in developing countries between education, cognitive skills and wage and income from self-employment, as well as health status, migration, marriage prospects, fertility and political and community participation, is very limited.
- ‘Rates of return’ evidence that has supported a focus on primary education is mostly from the 1980s and before. In addition to being largely outdated, it is methodologically flawed and selectively cited.
- An example of the limitations of a human capital approach is evident with respect to instrumentalist arguments about female education breaking intergenerational transmission of poverty. These neglect aspects of existing power relations between the sexes and education’s importance in developing female voice and agency. South Asian experience suggests the validity of the relationship between education and fertility decline is questionable, given both what girls learn in school and the extent to which they are able to apply this knowledge, in that the relationship between education and autonomy is mediated by cultural relations of patriarchy. This has important implications for the possibilities of female education having the desired effect on lifecourse and intergenerational poverty, which a human capital approach is unable to unpack.
- There is inadequate literature on the effects of education and occupational and social mobility in developing countries; the very limited evidence that exists is dominated by small-scale single country studies.
- In future evaluations and research, it will be important to make the links between the ‘internal efficiency’ of programmes (including with respect to curriculum reform, teaching–learning approaches, etc.), the learning outcomes associated with them (for example, knowledge and skill acquisition, building of self-esteem and self-confidence and certificates which have currency in the labour market) and the later applications of education in life beyond school. A more detailed understanding of what the relationships look like and what their dynamics are will be critical to targeting educational innovations more sensitively to the needs of the poor.
- Educational policy and research efforts have tended to identify social groups considered vulnerable, disadvantaged and excluded. Poverty is generally a crosscutting element of these other aspects of disadvantage. Focusing on an

aggregated group of 'chronically poor' risks detracting from an in-depth understanding of specific causes of exclusion.

### *3.1.2 The form and quality of education and chronic poverty*

- If formal education is to contribute to processes that can support an escape from chronic poverty, it is crucial that it moves on from being a narrowly defined, academic, examination-oriented system and towards an approach that is proactive in enhancing learners' self-confidence, self-esteem and critical thinking. This in turn can build voice and agency, which are likely to play crucial roles in relation to poverty reduction. However, at present, the ways in which this can happen are insufficiently understood.
- For this, there is a need to look in more detail inside the education environment at both formal (overt) and hidden curricular processes within different institutional settings.
- Poor quality provision – in terms not only of physical facilities but also the relevance of that provision to peoples' situations and aspirations – is the most likely fare for those living in poorer areas of countries. The most socially, economically, politically and culturally marginalised groups are also the most educationally marginalised.
- Improving the quality of supply, to ensure that the schooling provided is of appropriate quality and relevance, is a major challenge, but clearly essential to the effectiveness of education as a tool with which to combat the intergenerational transmission of poverty.
- Primary schooling is an important starting point, particularly given that it is the level at which most children will get some access to school. However, post-basic education is likely to be important to overcome chronic poverty.
- Importantly, the literature available on education–poverty relationships does not adequately open up the black box of education provision to explore implications of the teaching and learning process on poverty. Existing datasets do not allow analysis of this kind, and these would need to be supplemented by qualitative evidence to gain an understanding of the processes occurring both within the school, as well as between schooling and future opportunities.

## **3.2 Education in international and national policy contexts**

### *3.2.1 The international policy sphere*

- Differences in numerical targets between the MDGs on poverty and education imply that the focus for poverty policies will be those who are easiest to reach (i.e. not the chronically poor) but somehow those same chronically poor will be able to overcome barriers to attending primary schooling.



- The international emphasis on primary education under the second (education) MDG is more narrowly conceived and school focused than the EFA discourse. This narrowed focus may be detrimental to focusing on developing the greater flexibility of educational provision that is likely to be beneficial to the chronically poor. It appears to reinforce a narrow view of the link between education and poverty from a human capital perspective.
- International NGOs emphasise the link between education and poverty reduction, albeit generally more from a rights-based perspective, but also lack nuanced consideration of processes by which education can address poverty, and chronic poverty in particular.

### 3.2.2 *The national policy sphere*

- The expectation that education contributes to poverty reduction is widespread in national policy documentation, reflecting the discourses elsewhere, but lacks details on how this can be achieved.
- National policies on education generally target groups of crosscutting educational disadvantage, of which poverty is one factor, rather than focusing specifically on the poor.
- PRSPs could, in principle, support a more holistic, cross-sectoral approach to addressing poverty, through considering the processes that education and other interrelated factors could play, but in practice tend to consider sectors separately within an overall poverty framework. Discussion on education focuses largely on access to schooling in ways similar to the sector-specific policy statements. These tend to neglect teaching and learning strategies that would be needed for addressing poverty. A cross-sectoral approach, where adopted, can create problems of strategy ownership and implementation responsibility across sectoral ministries.
- A sectoral approach to childhood poverty may impose a false structure and set of choices that conceal the complexity of poor people's livelihoods. The limited engagement of poverty analyses at the sectoral level can result in a failure to understand the complexities of processes within education that could either help or hinder a poverty reduction agenda.
- Whether using a sectoral or a cross-sectoral approach, more attention needs to be paid to the link between education and poverty outcomes within strategies.
- Decentralisation may contribute to more accurate targeting of specific pro-poor interventions, but this should not be assumed, since it can also increase the politicisation of targeting, making it less, rather than more, accountable to the poor.

### 3.2.3 *Specific educational interventions*

- **Fee abolition.** Necessary but insufficient and also problematic. May have a good impact on enrolment, but direct (uniforms, stationery, etc.) and opportunity costs of education remain prohibitive to the poorest households. Can cause quality of education to suffer without significant investment in numbers and training of teachers and infrastructure.
- **Conditional cash/food transfer programmes.** Good impact on enrolment and attendance, and so student retention. Helps households overcome direct and opportunity costs of school, but there is a lack of clarity on the longer-term applications/uses of primary education received. Raises questions as to the long-term economic and political sustainability in countries dependent on external resources.
- **School feeding programmes.** Good impact on enrolment and attendance, and so student retention. Grain for the family may decrease a family's hunger poverty while a cooked school meal is educationally more effective, by improving an individual child's nutritional status, with benefits of alleviation of short-term hunger, improved ability to concentrate, improved cognitive performance. Where externally funded, concerns of sustainability and coverage.
- **Guarantee of schooling facility.** Good impact on enrolment of those unable to access existing schools. The notion of a 'social contract' between communities and governance structures enhances government accountability to those assumed to be the very poor. However, educational processes in such schools are of variable quality and so far no evidence has been identified about transfer to secondary schooling.

### 3.2.4 *Alternative providers*

- **Non-formal primary education programmes (NGO and other).** These appear to have a positive impact on enrolment of geographically and socially 'hard-to-reach' children, with achievement rates comparable with or better than those in formal government schools, and the potential for more holistic, creative and empowering educational approaches. Where ongoing training is provided, locally-recruited 'para' teachers can perform well (pedagogically and in terms of child/community empowerment); evidence on successful transfer to formal secondary schools is sketchy, as is that on the longer-term effects on those who are unable to continue – including questions regarding: whether 'credentials' gained through NFPE provide access to the same opportunities as formal schooling; and quality and community development effects of a two-tiered payment and training system for NFPE/NGO vs. 'standard' government primary school teachers.
- **Private.** Inconclusive evidence about the capacity of low-fee private schools to provide education of sufficient quality/qualifications to assist users of these schools in overcoming poverty. Poor state regulation is an obstacle to quality assurance.

### 3.2.5 *Future research on the links between education and chronic poverty*

- Research able to shed light on *how* educational processes (in school and between school and communities/livelihoods) influence escape from chronic poverty is urgently needed. In order to illuminate the nuances and complexity of such links, the most promising approach appears to be qualitative, such as life histories. Longitudinal research combining quantitative and qualitative methods would also be informative.
- Interdisciplinary research, bringing together the expertise of currently unconnected scholars of chronic poverty and scholars of education, could be expected to be highly productive.

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## Appendix

### **Appendix 1: Policy paper: the impact of education policy approaches and programmes on the chronically poor**

*Key Question:* in what ways do national policy approaches and programmes address the educational needs of the chronically poor?

*Indicative sub-questions:*

#### *Conceptual framework and background*

- Who are the 'chronically poor' in an educational context?
- What evidence exists on the pattern of enrolment of children from chronically poor households?
- What types of education services are the chronically poor able to access?

#### International educational policy context

- Does the international educational policy context recognise the chronically poor as needing targeted education?
- Do international education development targets recognise the chronically poor?
- In so far as the chronically poor are recognised in the international context, what is the outcome of that recognition?

#### National policy approaches and plans in political/economic context

- To what extent do national policy approaches plans consider the educational needs of the chronically poor?
- To the extent that they do recognise their educational needs, what types of policy approaches can be identified to address these needs?
- What evidence exists on the impact of different education policy approaches on the chronically poor?
- What distinctive political and economic contexts are identifiable that have enabled improvements in educational access for the chronically poor?

#### Education programmes targeted at the chronically poor

- What types of providers are most likely to support education programmes for the chronically poor, and in what ways?

- How do case study programmes identify and respond to the educational needs of the chronically poor – how successful have these been?

Note:

- The paper will select countries in different regions (South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America) as a focus for analysis of national planning and policy approaches, and for case study programmes. Countries under consideration include India, Bangladesh, Malawi, Ethiopia, Colombia and Guatemala. A focus on LDCs is important.
- This is an indicative list of issues to be addressed – some of which are inter-related.
- The ability to provide evidence will depend on the availability of information.
- Evidence of ‘impact’ will require experience over a period of time, given the time lag effects.

**Summary:**

Not being able to attend school may not have disastrous short-term consequences but limits the life opportunities of those who do not become literate and numerate which, in turn, has implications for education and livelihoods of future generations. CPRC research on education has thus far been fairly limited. It is clear that we need a substantial focus on education in CPR2 because of its direct influence on the inter-generational transmission of poverty.

This policy paper will consider the visibility of the educational needs of the chronically poor within policy approaches and plans, and responses to addressing these needs. In addition, case study education programmes will be selected to analyse the extent to which they identify and address the needs of the chronically poor. Drawing on this analysis, the paper will aim to identify approaches to education provision for the chronically poor both within mainstream formal schooling, as well as through alternative approaches. The research will focus on basic education for school-age children but may consider other forms of education with respect to the chronically poor where relevant. Both government and non-government provision will be examined (notably NGO/civil society organisations; the private sector will be included where it is found to contribute significantly to pro-chronically poor provision).

Particular attention will be paid to the influence of the international agenda, and the political and economic context of national education and poverty reduction policy and planning approaches.

Research under this theme will provide a framework for analysing education for the chronically poor, and will involve a desk-based comparative analysis of policy and programmes using both qualitative and quantitative evidence, drawing on relevant studies and evaluations, where available. Following an initial review of the literature, particular

countries/programmes will be selected. The paper will identify the range of information available to respond to the identified questions, and highlight any gaps that deserve attention in further research on the topic.

## Appendix 2: Documents reviewed through searches

### Concepts

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