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**Chronic Poverty
Research Centre**

Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty Research Brief

INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH BRIEF

The Intergenerational Transmission (IGT) of Poverty Theme at the Chronic Poverty Research Centre promotes research and discussion on the drivers, maintainers and interrupters of intergenerational and life-course poverty. This fourth Research Brief reviews the findings of four recently commissioned papers, drawing out their implications for understanding, explaining and developing policy against childhood, life-course and inter-generationally transmitted poverty. Details of these papers and where to find them on-line can be found at the end of this brief.

IGT POVERTY DURING THE AIDS EPIDEMIC IN UGANDA

These days at times I wish I could run away. Since the death of my child I think about many things but then when I think about going away, who should I leave my grand-children's land to? I stay in this little house and fail to sleep from worry!

- Medina, South-West Uganda

Medina, now in her 80s, was categorised as 'poor' in both 1991 and 2006. Madina's two grandchildren had come to live with her as young children. Madina had struggled to support and educate both, as neither of their fathers provided support, and particularly after their mother remarried and couldn't take them to live with her new husband. Neither went further than primary school.

As she aged, her teenage grandchildren became her greatest support—her granddaughter cooked and cleaned, collected her asthma medication and worked as a house cleaner, and her grandson had a job repairing bicycles. They both worked hard cultivating crops for sale.

By the time Madina's daughter had died of AIDS-related illness in 2007, things had changed: her grandson moved to Kampala to look for work, and his sister moved to another village with her partner. With the death of Agnes the family lost access to the land on her husband's family's plot, but once her grandchildren had left, Madina was struggling to cultivate even a small portion of the land.

In a recent paper by Janet Seeley, the role of HIV and AIDS in the intergenerational transmission of poverty in rural Uganda is examined through longitudinal survey and case study data. Seeley focuses on:

- ▶ the factors that contribute to chronic poverty in rural Uganda;
- ▶ the patterns of intergenerational transfers and asset inheritance in the study households;
- ▶ the impact on children orphaned by AIDS and on older people of the intergenerational transmission of poverty, and
- ▶ the gender aspects in the transmission of intergenerational poverty in the context of the AIDS epidemic.

Data from 15 case study households, drawn from the findings of a longitudinal study of rural households in South-West Uganda, is used to examine these factors.

The case study households were or are all headed by women, a number of whom have experienced relationship instability and have as a consequence often struggled to take care of children and grandchildren with little support from partners. Their experience of managing land and property transfers, the provision for children's education and skill-training and health care are described. Seeley examines the impact on the transmission of poverty to children of HIV and AIDS, as well as the same impact on older people. She then explores some of the strategies employed by household members to break the cycle of poverty, including migration for waged work and marriage. Some policy implications of the findings are explored: the provision of anti-retroviral therapy, food security as well as access to good education and work and the importance of kin in the provision of support.

The findings of this study show how a large network of kin and associates who can help out provides an effective safety net for many poor families in times of need. However, members of poor families who prosper often find themselves with additional mouths



Teenagers and children in a Zimbabwean IDP camp afflicted by HIV/AIDS, with many child- and elder-headed households. © Kate Bird, 2006.

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to feed that can drain their resources. The conditions in which poverty exist are reproduced through similar mechanisms to those experienced by previous generations: **poverty is not 'transmitted' so much as recreated because external and internal factors continue to constrain the opportunities to build assets.**

Seeley concludes that despite the strain that the AIDS epidemic has put on many families the kin network remains a vital safety net in the absence of other social support, yet it is also a levelling force: keeping poor adults and their children poor, as resources are stretched, shared and traded.

***Janet Seeley** is a Senior Lecturer in Gender and Development at the School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia, where she has been based since 2000. Her main continuing research experience and interests are in the social aspects of HIV and AIDS, health and development, migration, the understanding of chronic poverty, and social protection.*



A young boy tucks small fish into matting for drying in Sunamganj, north-eastern Bangladesh. © World Fish Centre 2008.

IGT AND LIFE-CYCLE POVERTY IN RURAL BANGLADESH

A recent paper by Agnes Quisumbing draws on a quantitative research study into the dynamics of poverty in rural Bangladesh collaboratively undertaken by CPRC, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and Data Analysis and Technical Assistance, Ltd (DATA). The longitudinal study on which this study is based builds on three surveys conducted by IFPRI in Bangladesh to evaluate the short-term impacts of microfinance, new vegetable and fish technologies, and the introduction of food-for-education transfers. Two rounds of qualitative research on perceptions of change and life histories were undertaken in this 'Q-squared' study (see CPRC Working Papers 69, 84 and forthcoming by Peter Davis, University of Bath).

In the three samples surveyed, the longitudinal data suggests that between 16 and 26 per cent of households were chronically poor between 1994-6 and 2006.

The paper makes some important points about the inter-generational transmission of poverty in this context, and the relevance of life course factors. Focus group discussions also identified demographic and life-cycle factors as among the important drivers of poverty. In particular, the proportions of men and women aged 55 years and older were significant predictors of

chronic poverty, whereas the probability of never being poor increased with the educational attainment of the household head and with household assets, but decreased with the proportion of household members in the younger age groups.

Higher proportions of children and older people are also significantly associated with lower per capita consumption, pointing to the importance of life-cycle and demographic factors in the creation and transmission of poverty. Having older household members also makes the household vulnerable to shocks such as illness, death, and property division. When property is divided upon the parents' death or children grow up and leave, the resources of the original household are often reduced, sometimes significantly. Illness shocks—in particular, the income foregone when an income earner falls ill—are important contributors to poverty. The impact of these and other shocks—such as dowry and wedding expenses, floods, and legal costs—in reducing consumption is shown to depend on the amount of land and assets owned by the household together with the schooling of the household head.

Dowry expenses—a type of intergenerational transfer—represent a substantial drain on household resources, as suggested by both the quantitative and qualitative work. In a society where consumption levels are already low, dowries represent forced savings as households with daughters significantly reduce consumption to save up for dowries.

There are also some surprising results in terms of the ways in which shocks affect households with different characteristics. Illness-related income losses and death of a household member both are associated with *higher* per capita consumption of households whose heads have less than four years of schooling; and dowry and wedding expenses, while having a negative impact on households as a whole, are associated with *higher* per capita consumption for households whose heads have less than four years of schooling. The completion of the qualitative results is required to fully understand these results.

In another forthcoming CPRC working paper, Quisumbing has analysed the data with an eye to specifically understanding the role of the inheritance and transfer at marriage of assets (schooling, land, and assets) in IGT poverty. Again, a complex picture emerges.

The paper begins by characterizing the pattern and timing of inter-generational transfers and inheritance, highlighting pronounced differences between men and women. In Bangladesh, while marriage provides an occasion for families to make large transfers to the new couple, the final division of the parents' property occurs upon death. However, the timing of intergenerational transfers is gender-specific, with transfers to daughters occurring as dowries at the time of marriage, and bequests, largely to sons, occurring at the death of the parent.

The paper then estimates the determinants of intergenerational transfers and assets at marriage, as a function of individual characteristics and family background. Drawing on the newly collected data, it compares the impact of inherited assets and intergenerational transfers, more broadly defined, on current landholdings, assets, and consumption. It then explores how households' poverty transition categories (e.g. whether they are chronically poor, moving out of poverty, falling into poverty, or never poor) are affected by inherited human and physical capital of both husband and wife, sibling support networks, household characteristics as of the baseline survey, and shocks experienced by the household, controlling for unobserved community characteristics.



The study reveals that **in rural Bangladesh, intergenerational transfers are biased against women, and play an important role in the intergenerational transmission of poverty:**

- ▶ First, parental investment in children, whether through investment in schooling, and transfers of land and assets, tends to be biased against girls. Even if transfers at marriage favour brides, they do not compensate for the asset gap in inherited assets and schooling.
- ▶ Second, sisters often give up their share of their inheritance for their brothers, in return for economic and social support. (Indeed, one of the most important safety nets against falling into chronic poverty is the number of brothers that the wife has.) Thus, a very small share of the household's human and physical assets comes from wives.
- ▶ Third, intergenerational transfers are important determinants of current outcomes. Most of the transfers that significantly affect monetary measures of well-being are male-held transfers, such as husband's schooling, husband's land, and husband's assets, although the totality of intergenerationally transferred assets to wives also is an important determinant of current assets.

Taking these results at face value, it seems that intergenerational transfers received by women do not play an important role in family welfare. However, these results need to be interpreted carefully in the Bangladeshi context.

First, women not only bring extremely low levels of schooling and assets to marriage, but also operate in an environment where they may not be able to realize economic or monetary returns to those transfers, so it's not surprising to see low returns to women's physical and human assets. In contrast, the existing analysis shows high returns to women's social networks — their network of brothers. Taken together, these findings imply that women are extremely dependent on male relatives — their husbands and brothers.

Second, future analysis needs to be expanded to explore how intergenerational transfers affect *non-monetary* factors related to the poverty and well-being of future generations, such as investments in education, health, and nutrition. Studies looking at these relationships using the earlier data set show that resources controlled by women increase investments in child schooling, and improve child health, particularly those of girls. In an environment where women are restricted from realising monetary or economic returns to intergenerationally transferred assets, women invest in non-monetary assets — their children — and also realize returns from non-monetary assets, such as their support network of brothers. Any analysis of IGT poverty should therefore do well not only to examine physical and financial assets transferred, but also intergenerational support networks.

IGT OF HUMAN CAPITAL IN RURAL GUATEMALA

Quisumbing and colleagues Jere Behrman (Univ. of Pennsylvania), Alexis Murphy (IFPRI) and Kathryn Yount (Emory Univ.) have recently completed a quantitative study investigating the effects of mothers' 'intellectual human capital' (cognitive skills as well as schooling attainment) and 'biological human capital' (long-run nutritional status) on children's intellectual and biological human capital. The study, currently under review and forthcoming as a CPRC working paper, uses rich Guatemalan longitudinal data collected over 35 years to explore the limitations of 'standard' estimates of these relationships. Results suggest that:

- ▶ maternal human capital is more important than standard estimates suggest;

- ▶ maternal cognitive skills have a greater impact on children's biological human capital than maternal schooling attainment;
- ▶ for some important indicators of children's human capital, maternal biological capital has larger effect sizes than does maternal intellectual capital.

These results imply that breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty, malnutrition and intellectual deprivation through investing in women's human capital may be even more effective than the previous literature has suggested, but requires approaches that take into account more dimensions of women's human capital than just their schooling. Effective interventions to improve women's biological and intellectual human capital often begin *in utero* or in early childhood and thus will take longer before they are effective than would appear were more schooling the only channel.

Agnes Quisumbing is Senior Research Fellow in the Food Consumption and Nutrition Division of IFPRI. She co-leads a multi-country research programme on the factors that enable people to move out of poverty over the long term, focusing on the role of shocks, interventions and changes in the policy environment. Agnes' research expertise include poverty, intra-household resource allocation, gender, property rights, economic mobility and development policy.

OTHER CPRC-IGT NEWS

Pilot research exploring the relationship between literacy functionings and chronic and intergenerational poverty in urban and rural Bangladesh was undertaken by Bryan Maddox (University of East Anglia) and Karen Moore (CPRC/University of Manchester) in February 2008. Focus-group discussions and semi-structured interviews with poor men, women and children explored the use value of literacy and numeracy, and how this related to well-being. Watch this space for news of a paper!

Research on **Policies and programmes for interrupting IGT poverty in developed countries, and transferability to developing countries** is now underway within the CPRC, led by Ursula Grant (CPRC/ODI) and Karen Moore. Publications forthcoming in October will include an annotated bibliography focusing on four countries (Denmark, Germany, UK and US), a working paper drawing on key informant interviews with academics and policymakers, and the beginnings of a policy database.

NOTICE BOARD

Recent and forthcoming conferences and workshops

1 July 2008 — Workshop on Poverty and Education in International Development. DEV, University of East Anglia, Norwich. The workshop brought together a small group of researchers to explore critical and theoretical perspectives on education and multidimensional and chronic poverty. For further details, contact Karen.Moore@manchester.ac.uk.

31 August-3 September 2008 — Children and Injuries. ISVIP (International Society for Violence and Injury Prevention) Conference, University of Cape Town, South Africa. An objective of the event is to produce clear and founding guidelines regarding violence and injury prevention both globally and specifically for Sub-Saharan Africa. The conference will focus on both accidental and violent injuries. Crosscutting topics include: epidemiological and causal factors, risk and resilience factors, prevention interventions, policies, implementation and legislation, education, and environmental factors. For further details, see www.uct-cmc.co.za/Conferences/conf-main.asp?Conf_ID=71&Page=Home.





School children in a Dhaka slum participate in research on literacy. For these kids, the most important uses of literacy were to help their parents with a range of tasks, including teaching them to read and write, and reading medicine packaging and prescriptions. Several of the girls help their parents keep business accounts, and several are paid to tutor other children. © Karen Moore 2008.

12-14 November 2008 — **Learn Without Fear: Looking at Violence from the Gender Perspective.** International conference, Plan International Deutschland, Hamburg, Germany. Plan's upcoming international campaign "**Learn without Fear**" envisions a world where children can go to school in safety and expect a quality learning experience without fear of threats of violence. The conference aims to compile a set of gender-sensitive recommendations to support advocacy work for safe and child-friendly schools worldwide. It provides a forum for international experts to link research results with practical experiences. For further details, see www.learnwithoutfear.de.

January 2009 — **Child Poverty and Disparities: Public Policies for Social Justice.** Cairo, Egypt. Within the framework of the First International Forum for the Developing Countries Think Tanks, UNICEF-Egypt is organizing this international conference as a platform for innovative thinking on social policy and child rights. It will bring together academics, policy makers, practitioners as well as university students to exchange experiences and discuss proposals for inclusive and child-sensitive public social and economic policies that aim to reduce child poverty and are based on scientific evidence. **Call for papers deadline: 31 October 2008.** For further details, see www.unicef.org/egypt/media_4579.html.

New On-Line Photo Exhibition

Panos London, with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, has launched a new online photo exhibition — **Growing Pains**, by Chris de Bode — exploring the impact of HIV/AIDS on children in South Africa. The exhibition can be viewed at www.panos.co.uk, and a multimedia presentation can be found at panos.org.uk/?lid=23539.

New Network

The European Cities Against Child Poverty Network is a new EU-wide partnership involving the cities of London, Amsterdam, Budapest, Helsinki and Milan and associated partners. The two-year project addresses the root causes of child poverty in cities through sharing practical experience. A holistic approach to child poverty is taken, which includes the following themes: role of education and health care policy to break cycles of deprivation, access to employment for parents, and the impact of poor housing conditions on children. Through the network, practitioners in charge of social services in partner cities share tried and tested approaches on how best to tackle child poverty through initiatives and policies, taking the best practice from all partners and developing a practical guide to help shape future policy – to make a real difference. For further details of network and forthcoming events, see www.againstchildpoverty.com.

PUBLICATIONS

Since our last newsletter, several papers with a focus on issues relating to the intergenerational transmission of poverty have been commissioned and published by CPRC.

Behrman, J. R., Murphy, A., Quisumbing, A. R., and Yount, K. (2008) **Are returns to Mothers' Human Capital Realized in the Next Generation? The Impact of Mothers' Intellectual Human Capital and Long-Run Nutritional Status on Children's Human Capital in Guatemala.** CPRC Working Paper, forthcoming at www.chronicpoverty.org.

Ojermark, A. (2007) **Presenting Life Histories: A literature review and annotated bibliography.** CPRC Working Paper 101/ Annotated Bibliography 6. Available at: www.chronicpoverty.org/p/493/publication-details.php.

Seeley, J. (2008) **The Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty during the AIDS Epidemic in Uganda.** CPRC Working Paper 110. Available at: www.chronicpoverty.org/p/598/publication-details.php.

Quisumbing, A. R. (2008) **The dynamics of poverty in rural Bangladesh: Determinants of poverty reduction.** CPRC-IFPRI Brief 2. Forthcoming at www.chronicpoverty.org.

Quisumbing, A. R. (2008) **Inheritance and the intergenerational transmission of poverty in Bangladesh: Preliminary results from a longitudinal study of rural households.** CPRC Working Paper, forthcoming at www.chronicpoverty.org.

Quisumbing, A. R. (2007) **Poverty transitions, shocks, and consumption in rural Bangladesh: Preliminary results from a longitudinal household survey.** CPRC Working Paper 105. Available at: www.chronicpoverty.org/p/497/publication-details.php.

FOLLOWING UP This **Research Brief** will be produced twice a year. Contributions are welcome. Please send your short opinion pieces, notices, comments and suggestions to karen.moore@manchester.ac.uk. See www.chronicpoverty.org for copies of this Research Brief and other resources. To contact us, join the CPRC mailing list, or receive this newsletter by email or post, email us at karen.moore@manchester.ac.uk.



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