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Enduring Poverty and the Conditions of Childhood Lifecourse and Intergenerational Poverty Transmissions*

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Summary. - In this paper, we explore the conditions of childhood that can lead to poverty throughout the lifecourse and affect transfers of poverty to the next generation. The largely inconclusive evidence base surrounding lifecourse and intergenerational poverty transmission is reviewed before a discussion of the key social processes and contexts that impact on childhood, lifecourse and intergenerational poverty. Prioritized issues – nutrition, child care and guidance, education, child work, and aspirations and attitudes – are explored within the context of UNICEF’s basic framework of survival, protection, development and participation. The paper concludes with an analysis of elements of the wider environment, critical to enabling action in childhood to break poverty cycles.

Keywords- Child poverty; intergenerationally transmitted poverty; lifecourse poverty; policy; education; nutrition; child work

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1. CONCEPTUALISING THE LINKS

In the first years of the 21st century, an estimated 600 million children are growing up in poverty (UNICEF, 2000). Intuitively, children who have had a ‘good’ start in life, should be at much less risk of being poor as adults, and of initiating another cycle of poverty with their own children. Thus tackling childhood poverty, and the mechanisms that lead to transmission of poverty over a lifecourse and between generations, would seem to be a priority in tackling chronic poverty. This paper examines the conditions of childhood that can lead to poverty in later life or involve poverty transfers to the next generation. By conditions we mean the full experience of childhood in its broader socio-political and economic environment as well as specific conditions related to individual interactions and social processes.

The concepts of both childhood poverty and chronic poverty emphasize the timing of poverty – the particular time in the lifecycle when it occurs, and its duration. The urgency of addressing childhood poverty derives partly from the vulnerability of young people to the impacts of poverty.¹ Similarly, one rationale for distinguishing chronic and transient poverty is that long periods in poverty may well have more damaging long-term effects than short periods (Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 1995). The ideas of lifecourse and intergenerational transmission of poverty emphasize 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.

Intergenerational transmission of poverty can involve the ‘private’ transmission of poverty from older generations of individuals and families to younger generations (especially, but not solely, from parents to children), and the ‘public’ transfer (or lack of transfer) of resources from one generation to the next through, for example, redistribution of the taxed income of older generations to support the education of the youngest. This paper principally discusses individual and family transmissions of poverty, and considers the ‘public’ aspect of these transfers primarily in terms of action to break transmission cycles. Analytically, these processes can be distinguished from the closely related phenomenon of lifecourse transmission of poverty, as for example, when a poor child or young

person grows up to be a poor adult. In practice, the processes involved in both often are so closely related that in many cases the distinction is difficult to make. The paper thus focuses on the linked set of processes relating to childhood wellbeing that may result in poverty transfers, distinguishing lifecourse and intergenerational transfers, where appropriate.

What is transmitted includes financial, material and environmental assets, (such as land, livestock, livelihoods, equipment, cash or debt); human capital (such as education, coping strategies, physical health or disease); and attitudes, cultural and other knowledge and traditions (such as status, prejudice, norms of entitlement and value systems, survival strategies, kin group, political access). Transmissions can be both positive (cash assets, positive aspirations) and negative (bonded labor, poor nutrition, gender discrimination).² In this paper we focus on transmissions that are broadly generalizable and specific to childhood. Thus some more specific mechanisms of poverty transmission such as inheritable or contagious diseases (e.g. HIV), conflict, or specific environmental degradation are not covered.

A multitude of causal factors – economic, political, environmental and social – are involved in lifecourse and intergenerational poverty transmission. Negative impacts of, for example, indebtedness, unemployment, conflict, ecological stress, or cultural norms, to name a few, can result in harm in childhood that impacts over a lifecourse or between generations. Some critical examples include poor nutrition and chronic ill health, low educational achievement, psychological harm and low aspirations. What is pertinent is how and whether the real and felt negative effects can be overcome over a lifecourse and/or between generations, and, if not, what it is that prevents positive outcomes. There are clearly potential opportunities to disrupt negative poverty cycles, opportunities which themselves are mediated through the same economic, social, political and environmental drivers that have the potential to harm (Moore, 2001).

These opportunities, to interrupt lifecourse or intergenerational poverty transmissions, are closely related to how individuals enable themselves, or are enabled by others, to react to opportunities or make changes in their life, and to creating the broader environment in which it is possible to do so.

Thus a girl child denied access to education in South Asia needs to overcome cultural and family constraints and be provided with sufficient financial assets to attend school. At the same time, education provision must be made available – financially, legally and physically – probably by the state. This complex interaction of opportunities is not new knowledge. However, with different development agencies focused on different aspects of the whole, often there has been a lack of integration between priorities, actions and effects.

Clearly a wide range of economic, political, environmental and social factors, both as causes and solutions to poverty and its transmission, are fundamentally important. These underpin all aspects of poverty, and as such are too broad to be discussed in any detail in this paper. However, what we do wish to illuminate are the most important issues and connections surrounding child development and poverty transfers, spanning the micro environment, where individual volition and the social context are vitally important, and the macro environment, where states or other actors, must create appropriate environments for child development and anti-poverty action.

Starting, therefore, at the micro-level, the critical spaces pertinent to childhood experience and lifecourse and intergenerational poverty transfers are related to individual actions, the interface between the individual and the wider environment and the set of social processes that connect the individual to this environment and enable or constrain change over time. For example, the individual volition necessary for a mother to seek health care for her child or herself may be encouraged, or constrained, by her own learnt confidence, language ability, knowledge of available healthcare, support by kin or local groups, cultural constraints on her mobility or the permissibility for her to see a male doctor.

The wider environment in which action is taken must also be conducive for the individual to make gains. Health seeking must be met with health provision; production of goods with viable markets, and so on. A wider enabling environment consistent with child development goals therefore needs to create a policy environment that recognizes connections and prioritizes and invests in those connections and areas most important for child development. Thus we devote part of this paper to

identifying areas for prioritization and conclude the paper with an analysis of connected policy processes. The paper spans the micro to the macro, and specific policy areas and social processes. As this paper argues, it is the complete context, with recognition of a wide range of necessary connections, which is fundamental to good childhood development and the prevention of poverty transmissions.

Much of the evidence base around poverty transmissions reveals an ambiguous and sometimes contradictory set of conclusions. Whilst some key areas can be deduced as commonly important factors (such as parental education, socio-economic status and social connectedness), much of the existing evidence points towards the importance of specific contexts in determining poverty transmissions. It is the importance of contexts, of linked processes and connections that we emphasize in this paper. We review the inconclusive evidence base below and then discuss, in three parts, social processes and social contexts, prioritized issues, and the wider enabling environment, in an attempt to identify the connections and contexts through which action in childhood can break poverty cycles.

To look at areas of priority we make use of a basic framework of survival, protection, development and participation developed by UNICEF as a means of categorizing the key rights recognized by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).³ They encompass the factors crucial to children's wellbeing and development, and as such are critical sites in breaking lifecourse and intergenerational poverty cycles. These four areas can both be related to a range of contexts and connections – such as cultural norms and kinship structures – as well as incorporating more specific elements of poverty and wellbeing such as nutrition and health.

2. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF LIFECOURSE AND INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF POVERTY

(a) *Critical factors in intergenerational and lifecourse poverty transmission – key findings*

The most striking features of the body of evidence on poverty transfers are (i) its ambiguity and highly context-dependent conclusions and (ii) much more evidence of correlations between indicators of parental and child wellbeing, and of overall levels of social mobility, than of the

processes by which poverty cycles are reinforced or broken (Solon, 1999). Overall, the literature suggests that individuals can break out of intergenerational poverty cycles, but perhaps to a lesser extent than commonly believed (Corcoran, 1995; Solon, 1999; Binder & Woodruffe, 1999). It also suggests that people who move out of poverty are likely to move into the ranks of the slightly less poor (Yaquib, 2000) and that escape from poverty depends on numerous factors including: educational opportunities; employment opportunities in adulthood; parental or neighborhood role models; familial and child's aspirations; health and nutrition (Glewwe, Jacoby & King, 1999); a child's position within a family; and when in a child's life poverty occurs (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997).

Thus, for example, Corcoran (1995), like most other US studies (e.g. Cheng & Page-Adams, 1999; Solon, 1999), finds that overall parental resources play a profound role in influencing children's subsequent income and employment outcomes, but that factors such as parental education or teenage pregnancy exert an influence on children over and above that related to income, indicating the importance of socialization.⁴ Andersen's (2000; 2001) Latin American studies find that a combination of gender, birth order and age of parents at child's birth, all of which influence resources available to particular children, and overall GNP per capita, and extent of urbanization, which influence investment in and quality of the public education system, are particularly important factors. These conclusions are supported by Binder and Woodruffe (1999) and Behrman, Birdsall and Székely (1998).

Overall, these findings reflect the kinds of data available and the broad themes of academic and policy interest in this area to date. We now turn to the nature of existing evidence, and its implications for the conclusions drawn here and by others.

(b) Nature of evidence

The most substantial body of evidence comes from the United States, United Kingdom and other 'Northern' countries, which have conducted longitudinal studies following the same individuals from childhood to adulthood.⁵ They are able to examine factors relevant in both lifecourse and intergenerational poverty transfers. The particular foci of this work have been income and employment

mobility, and their relationship to education. The close linkage of US research, in particular, to debates about the existence of an 'underclass' or 'cultures of poverty', and to explanations of poverty transfers based on psychological inheritances, have led to an additional focus on the impact of poverty on children's cognitive development, their development of aspirations, family childcare style, and the implications of growing up in a poor neighborhood (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan & Aber, 2000; Mayer, 1997). Though some qualitative studies explore aspects of poverty transmission, such as parents and young peoples' attitudes and aspirations (e.g. Roker, 1998) and agency in the reproduction of class power (Willis, 1977; and Bourdieu, 1984), the relative wealth of panel studies means that Northern data on poverty transmission issues are principally quantitative.

A lack of panel data has meant that similar quantitative work is much less common in the South.⁶ As Baulch and Hoddinott (2000) note, only twelve of the 110 low and medium human development countries (as per the UNDP's 1998 definitions) have household level data that allow poverty dynamics analysis, much less analysis spanning generations. The majority of these studies span less than five years and/or have only two waves of data. Relatively more longitudinal health and demographic studies have been conducted in the South, enabling some conclusions about lifecourse and intergenerational transmission of health status. These datasets are more revealing of correlations between parents' wellbeing and that of their children, and thus of intergenerational rather than lifecourse poverty transmissions. Outside the US and Europe, the most substantial body of work addressing intergenerational poverty transfers and social mobility come from Latin America (Andersen, 2000, 2001; Behrman, Birdsall & Székely, 1998).

As in the North, qualitative research exploring these issues is limited. Few of the many, particularly anthropological, studies that have maintained contact with specific individuals and families over decades have explored issues of poverty transmission. Life histories, potentially a rich information source, have likewise been underutilized.

Much research in this area focuses principally on the individual as actor or on family-level factors and dynamics. This reflects the individualistic approach to poverty analysis of much of the US

underclass debate, and the psychological focus of many studies. Methodological difficulties in relating micro-longitudinal data to wider trends are, of course, also important.⁷ Finally, as in other policy oriented literature, a focus on ‘the problem’, may be casting into shadow the wider political-economic and social context. Notable exceptions, exploring structural aspects of class reproduction, include Willis (1977), Bourdieu (1984) and Wilson (1987).

Two other points about the nature of evidence are worth noting. Northern studies, focusing principally on comparisons of earnings between generations, have tended to compare fathers, sons and brothers, and patterns of poverty cycles among women have received substantially less attention (Solon, 1999). Southern studies, with their particular focus on education and nutrition, have explicitly paid more attention to both women’s welfare status and that of sons and daughters and so gendered patterns are much clearer.

Finally, existing research, other than that on nutrition and health, has paid relatively little attention to which forms of early damage caused by poverty can be overcome later in life. This partly reflects existing data, which covers individuals from birth to early adulthood. Thus, the implications of employment or training opportunities, or ‘lucky breaks’ in adulthood, are not explored. As a result, relatively little is known about the extent to which elements of poverty-related disadvantage, either individually or in combination, can be overcome over a longer timeframe.

Clearly the issues identified in section 2(a) exemplify, and are affected by, a range of processes, related to individual volition, social relations and organization, particular mechanisms of transmission and the broader environment. Section 3 analyses some of the ways in which social relations and processes mediate poverty transfers.

3. SOCIAL RELATIONS

Social relations mediate the points of interface between the individual and wider community and can be critical in facilitating or hindering mobility out of poverty. Thus, they are discussed here as potential mediating structures and processes surrounding poverty transmissions. Like all social

processes, those implicated in poverty transmission are based in culturally informed social relations and thus may differ substantially across contexts. Overall these issues have received relatively little attention in analysis of poverty transmission, reflecting the dominance of quantitative analysis, in which there understandably has been a focus on more easily measured phenomena.

Nonetheless, the issue of how social relations affects child wellbeing has attracted the attention of both researchers and policy makers, with some important insights into processes of poverty transfer. Social relations have been variously understood in terms of broad social norms and practices, social capital, connectedness and relationships of reciprocity, and family or kin structure. Here we outline the key insights work on these issues offers for understanding lifecourse and intergenerational transmission of poverty.

(a) Family, kin or household structure

There is a very broad range of literature on family structure, largely anthropological or sociological, and that covering childhood has increased in recent years (e.g. Scheper-Hughes, 1987; James, Jenks & Prout, 1999). Forms of family organization may affect both the material resources available to individual children, and the extent to which adults are able, or wish, to invest time in child nurturance and guidance, though much also depends on the family's and child's broader social networks and the support they can draw from these.

The importance of family organization in relation to poverty transfers is most commonly researched in cases where family structures appear to deviate from the perceived nuclear 'norm', in particular female-headed or single parent households, polygynous households and families containing children who are not directly related to the adult group, all of which are seen as potentially important sites of poverty transmission.

In both North and South, for different reasons, the implications of growing up with one parent (usually the mother) for child wellbeing and future poverty have received substantial attention. Northern research has focused on linkages between childhood poverty, teenage pregnancy, and

poverty, educational achievement and criminality in the next generation. For example, Kiernan (1998) finds that in the UK, teenage mothers – often single parents – are more likely to experience unemployment, be reliant on benefits and experience homelessness, and that the daughters of teenage mothers are more likely to become teenage mothers themselves (one in four compared to one in eight daughters of non-teenage mothers). As much as income or educational opportunities affect this process, the routes through which this arises also include gendered perceptions on the value and benefit of children; other studies suggest that it may be related to socialization and the development of aspirations (e.g. Corcoran, 1995).

A substantial body of research has examined the child wellbeing implications of household headship in developing countries (Chant, 1997; Handa, 1996; Panda, 1997; Quisumbing, Haddad & Peñab, 2001).⁸ Focusing on the current nutritional and educational welfare of children, rather than the long-term implications of growing up in a female-headed household, these studies indicate that effects are context specific and not generalizable. Overall, parental or carers' access to material and social resources, and ability to deploy them in ways that promote child wellbeing, rather than household composition, is crucial. Where social inequalities and discrimination reduces single mothers' access to resources, their children may be worse off (Panda, 1997), but this is sometimes mediated by a range of factors including mothers' determination to give their children a better future, and, in many cases support from other family members (Chant, 1997). Similarly, in polygynous households, where women are essentially responsible for providing for their children as in West Africa, there is no clear evidence that children are necessarily disadvantaged (Desai, 1991). However, where provision of resources is principally a male responsibility, stretched resources, or unequal distribution of resources can result in women and children living in poverty (MHHDC, 2000).

Fostering of children outside their natal family – a practice of growing importance in some regions as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and labor migration – may also have implications for poverty transmission. Castle (1996) and Engle, Castle and Menon (1996) find that in Mali children's health and nutrition outcomes depend on the reason for fostering – i.e. whether it was requested by an older person or childless family, or forced by death, divorce or migration – and the resources available

to fostered children, as well as the bonds formed between foster children and their carers. In Sierra Leone, as elsewhere in West Africa, fostering children out can secure a better future for them, through access to education, or simply increased access to food (Bledsoe, 1990; Serra, 1999), and can be an important strategy for maintaining social relationships and access to resources.

Both these strands of research are important reminders of the need for context specificity, and warn against the implicit assumption in much thinking about childhood and family wellbeing that the patriarchal nuclear family is the best environment for securing child welfare and breaking poverty cycles (White, 2002). It is social inequalities and discrimination combined with family composition, rather than family composition alone, that determine poverty outcomes.

(b) Social norms and practices

Norms and practices with implications for poverty transfers include the above mentioned discriminatory attitudes and socially-determined inequalities based, for example, on class or caste. A wide range of other norms and practices also have implications for poverty transfers. Transfers are suppressed or operate by depriving individuals of, or providing them with, opportunities, these include the potential for asset gain, social connections, educational investment or political power, all of which are vital aspects of individual and group potential.

A wide range of norms and practices are of relevance to children. Norms around access to assets and distribution of assets within families and between generations profoundly and directly affect children – such as allocating money for boys rather than girls schooling or providing better nutrition or health care to particular children. Clearly broader norms and practices that affect adults also affect children, such as cultural practices inhibiting women’s movement or access to resources. As well as affecting the ways in which resources are allocated and accessed, these norms are themselves resources, transmitted to greater or lesser degrees with ongoing implications for poverty transfers (Moore, 2001).

Norms and practices of resource allocation are, in most contexts, both highly gendered, and differentiated by a child's age and position within a family. Thus expectations of oldest or youngest children or boys and girls may lead to different distribution of resources in both childhood and adulthood. In South Asia, for example, there is substantial evidence of greater investment in boys' than girls' education (MHHDC, 2001). In large families, resources may be directed towards the youngest children (Andersen, 2000), or to older children (Leslie, 1987), and this may differ depending on the nature of the resources and the expectations on the children concerned. In some cases differential investment in particular children – one is educated, another marries into a rich family, a third learns a trade that is always in demand – can be part of a collective strategy for familial survival and advancement that carries ongoing reciprocal obligations into adulthood.

Resources available to the household overall are affected by conventional norms and practices and legal entitlements. Thus households of minorities, or where members have flouted social conventions, may be discriminated against and unable to access crucial resources; both women and men may be prohibited by custom from engaging in certain occupations, regardless of their economic situation – for example, restrictions on women ploughing in parts of India can constrain the agricultural activity of female-headed households and lead to their impoverishment (Agarwal, 1994). Inheritance laws or conventions that sanction discrimination between sons and daughters, or remove property from a widow and her children, may increase the likelihood of poverty among those they disadvantage (Stewart & Armstrong, 1990). Arguably the substantial differences in the proportions of black and white US children experiencing poverty at any point in their childhood – a difference of over 40 percent according to Duncan and Rodgers (1988) and over 20 percent according to Rank and Hirschl (1999:1059) – may reflect labor market discrimination, as well as lower levels of education among poor black parents.

In some contexts, both norms and social practices emphasize parental or adult sacrifice on behalf of the next generation, and adults may go without food in order to ensure their children are fed or educated (Bouis *et al.*, 1998; Kanji, 1995). Elsewhere, there may be stronger emphasis on children's responsibilities to their parents (Ennew, 1996) to ensure their wellbeing in old age; on ensuring the

collective wellbeing of today's family members; or on the different allocation of resources to the most 'productive' household members (Kabeer, 2000).

Public action to tackle poverty and interrupt poverty transfers clearly also reflects social norms. Where there is a strong sense of collective responsibility for social welfare, there may be stronger support for public safety nets, resource redistribution or good quality education for all, than where the wellbeing of the next generation is viewed largely as a private, familial matter (Esping-Anderson, 1990).

Cross-cultural variations are profound and these issues are raised as much to point to the diversity of social contexts that can influence poverty transmission as to draw conclusions about particular cases. However, there are clearly important implications for poverty transfers related to norms and practices. These are primarily where poverty transfers can be linked to norms and practices that deprive individuals or wider groups (such as girl children or ethnic minorities) of social, political and economic opportunities. In these cases it is vital to combat such deprivation through legal and educational means and by enhancing individuals' own social connectedness beyond the family.

(c) Social connectedness

Social connectedness also affects access to opportunities and resources, and can therefore play a critical role in mediating poverty transmission. The social connectedness of individuals has become an important theme in development and the controversial rise of social capital in development thinking and policy (Fine, 2001) has not bypassed the field of child wellbeing. While the merits and demerits of the concept of social capital and the ways in which it has been deployed cannot be discussed here, the concept has helped to bring to the fore issues of social connectedness, which anthropologists have long recognized as crucial in adult and child wellbeing. With strong social connections, people are able to get jobs, obtain resources in time of crisis, share childcare, ensure children's safety, borrow money and have an increased chance of voice or influence, and thus are able to prevent some of the most damaging effects of poverty and help the next generation escape from it.

A range of factors inhibit social connectedness and thus may be implicated in poverty transmission. Material poverty may mean that individuals are too busy surviving to have much time for developing social connections, or cannot engage in reciprocal relations that cost money (Gonzalez de la Rocha, 2000; Narayan *et al.*, 2000), and thus cannot develop social connections. Social discrimination against particular social classes, ethnic groups or individuals (e.g. single mothers), or ‘outsiders’ such as migrants, can all reduce people’s ability to form mutually supportive social relationships, as can limited education and thus opportunities to acquire connections with peers. Where gender norms circumscribe women’s and girls’ mobility, their opportunities to obtain non-familial connections may be particularly constrained (MHHDC, 2001).

It is undoubtedly the case that social connections can be of immense value in enabling the individual or wider group to discover and take advantage of opportunities and thus escape or prevent poverty transfers. What is less clear is whether or how social connections among the poor can be enhanced. As Morrow (1999) points out, structural power relations are critical to this discussion of ‘social capital’ and its formation, otherwise analysis remains at the level of description of social networks, and offers few insights for tackling poverty transfers. Structural power relations, as discussed above, are linked to social norms and practices, family and kin structures, and status, and thus these three areas of social relations cannot be treated separately.

Social relations profoundly influence access to opportunities and resources of all kinds. Social relations can entrench cycles of poverty – for example through norms of debt bondage, discrimination against girls or boys in access to food, education or health care, discrimination against single parent families, or through insufficient social and political support for action to break poverty cycles. The history of efforts to tackle social relations of this type suggests that political mobilization, backed by legal empowerment, and in some cases specific programmes channeling resources to disadvantaged groups, play a crucial role. Equally, social relations can be central to breaking poverty transfers – in enabling access to resources and self-confidence, and ensuring adequate care and nurturance for children. It is vital that such positive connections are not eroded by, for example, economic stress, which makes maintaining social connections impossible.

4. CRITICAL ASPECTS OF CHILD WELFARE FOR POVERTY TRANSFERS

Whilst recognizing the complexity of possible factors involved in these poverty transmissions, the critical issues identified here are pertinent both to childhood wellbeing and lifecourse and intergenerational poverty transmissions. To identify, from a huge range of potential areas, the prioritized issues of importance we have focused first on the child using the simple UNICEF framework of survival, protection, development and participation. Second, we have reviewed a wide range of literature and brought together the most common themes. Third, we have highlighted issues that are generalizable, so some context – specific issues such as HIV are not covered. Finally, we have identified issues that clearly have implications for poverty transfers.

(a) Survival and Protection

Children's most basic need is survival. While not all child mortality is poverty-related, such a high proportion of it is, particularly in Southern countries, that in most cases, it can itself be seen as an intergenerational poverty transfer. Beyond staying alive, good physical development, dependent largely on nutrition and physical care, is crucial in terms of poverty transfers. A closely related aspect of child care is good nurturance, which promotes all aspects of a child's development. Both these areas crucially depend on the presence of adequate family assets, not just to secure necessary food but also to enable sufficient parental or other adult caregiver time for child care and nurturance, through the provision of safe water, nutritious food, shelter, encouraging a child's development of practical and social skills, and providing emotional support.

Protection of children is closely related to both survival and development, and encompasses ensuring adequate resources for these vital processes, and ensuring the child is protected from physical and emotional harm. This may include harm arising from family poverty, and from dangerous persons or situations, such as conflict. Children and young people witnessing or experiencing conflict or violence can be severely traumatized with long term implications for their own behavior. Long term conflict can constrain children's overall development and education and destroy social relationships. Parents traumatized by war may find it difficult to adequately care for their children, or to generate a

living, and children may be left injured and/or orphaned, with serious implications for their survival, protection and development (Machel, 2000).

The ways in which poverty can be transmitted both from one generation to the next, and from childhood into adulthood via nutrition and health, and via the constraints to child care and nurturance, are examined below.

(i) *Nutrition*

Nutrition is both one of the most crucial ‘inputs’ to children’s survival and development, and an area where damage in early childhood can have some of the most significant effects on an individual’s wellbeing, and that of the next generation. Poverty remains one of the prime causes of malnutrition (Osmani, 1992) and of transmission of poor nutrition and health.⁹ The intergenerational transmission of poverty via nutrition can begin *in utero*, as the child of an inadequately nourished mother is likely to grow less rapidly than that of an adequately nourished mother – an estimated 30 million infants are born each year in developing countries with impaired growth due to poor nutrition during fetal life (James Commission, 2000). Babies born with a low birth weight (under 2.5 kg) are much more likely to die than heavier infants, and to be stunted and underweight in early life. This can reduce their ability to fight disease and thus increase their chances of ill-health and death both in the early years and in later life (ACC/SCN, 2000; James Commission, 2000; Kielman & McCord, 1988 in Tudawe, 2001).¹⁰

In malnourished and frequently sick young children, limited bodily resources may be conserved for fighting infection, with the result that they are directed away from brain and cognitive development. Where children’s cognitive development is impaired, particularly before age two, the impairment may be irreversible regardless of a later improvement in their nutrition and circumstances (ACC/SCN, 2000:14). Education and care that promotes children’s cognitive development may partially compensate for this (Yaqub, 2001), as may good nutrition during the adolescent growth spurt (Tudawe, 2001), and should thus be considered important policy foci, as well as good nutrition during pregnancy and in early childhood (Mora & Nestel, 2000).

Children whose cognitive development has been impaired in their early years may find learning more difficult, both at school and in terms of important life skills. Where this leads to difficulties obtaining skills or qualifications, their future labor market opportunities and thus earning prospects may be constrained. Similarly, for children who grow up to survive from manual labor, malnutrition in the early years may reduce their stature and impair their strength in adulthood, again reducing their earning prospects and possibly increasing their susceptibility to injury or disease, in comparison with better nourished peers.

Girls who grow up stunted or anemic are more likely to be underdeveloped for childbirth, and face higher risks of maternal and child mortality, and of low birthweight and stunting among their own children (ACC/SCN, 2000). This is often compounded by an earlier start to childbearing among poorer women than their better off counterparts – an estimated 12 percent of babies in the least developed countries are born to women aged 15 to 19 years (UNPD, 2000). Their babies are at greater risk of having a low birthweight and being less healthy, leading to the cycle of harmful long-term effects described earlier.

Overall, there is considerable evidence of the long-term and intergenerational effects of poor nutrition. Adult and child malnutrition remains an enormous problem. In 2000, over 150 million preschool children were estimated to be underweight and over 200 million children stunted (James Commission, 2000). The consequences of this are shocking – “at current rates of improvement, about 1 billion children will be growing up by 2020 with impaired mental development” (ibid.:iv). Tackling malnutrition should be an absolute priority for action. Clearly the specific action necessary is context-dependent, and includes food supplementation, both to promote adequate protein-calorie consumption and consumption of micro-nutrients, measures to promote later marriage and childbearing and thus prevent intergenerational transmission of poor nutritional and health status; and, combating gender or other biases in child feeding practices. Action to promote greater food security is also critical (James Commission, 2000; ACC/SCN, 2000). Many of these measures are dependent on public action – the wider enabling environment, discussed in section 5 – and on a social context that enables individuals to access the resources they need to meet their own or others’ nutritional needs (section 3).

(ii) *Child care, support and guidance*

Physical care and emotional nurturance are critical to child survival and development. However, an important outcome of economic stress over the last twenty years has been the increasing demands on women to fulfil the triple roles of child and family care, income generation, and participation in the wider community (e.g. Beneria & Feldman, 1992; Whitehead, 1995). One consequence is reduced time for child care and nurturance, and the delegation of this responsibility to others – in some cases, children who may be unable to care for their younger siblings adequately.

Most studies of women's work and child nutrition suggest that despite the constraints that work imposes on breastfeeding and weaning, overall the nutritional effect is limited. This may be because of increasing informalization of work (Gonzalez de la Rocha, 2000), which enables women to combine both care of infants and generate income (IFPRI, 2002). Reviewing 25 studies of the effect of women working on child nutrition in poor countries, Leslie (1987) finds that young children (of weaning age) may be most negatively affected – because they grow rapidly, suffer a lot from infectious diseases, but cannot consume large amounts at a time and need frequent, nutrient-dense meals to prevent malnutrition, which may be easier for non-working mothers. However, in many cases older children, whose mothers worked, were better nourished as their mothers were able to buy more nutritious food (*ibid*). Glick and Sahn's (1998) research corroborates these findings.

More qualitative evidence, much of it from practitioners', suggests that outside the nutritional sphere, constraints on child care can lead to inadequate supervision of young children and an increased risk of accidents. Observations from contexts as diverse as Mongolia, South Africa and Angola indicate that without affordable childcare or social support networks, parents are sometimes forced to leave young children in the care of another child, or alone, sometimes locked into a building, or tied to a piece of furniture for their 'safety' (Harper, 1998; Barbarin & Richter, 2001). Even where adults are physically present, work duties may mean they are unable to supervise young children and to prevent them engaging in harmful activities, such as drinking dirty water (Range, Naved & Bhattarai, 1997).

This lack of adequate child care can result in health problems, and accidents leading to injury, disablement and even death.

Where child care constraints mean that young children are left alone for long periods, or parents are too tired to spend time with their children, there may be consequences for children's emotional development. For example, in a study in Ghana, some children suggested that they found the inability of busy parents to find time to show them love or answer their questions one of the most harmful aspects of poverty (GNCC, 1997). Similarly, researchers in a Mongolian mining town suggest that

‘the reality is that such parents [poor parents] are sometimes trapped in terrible dilemmas: provide bread/nurture or guidance/love and attention? They spend time earning ‘for’ their children’s survival. But what time is left to be spent ‘with’ their children? (Baigal *et al.*, 2002:60).

When older children care for younger siblings, they can miss out on opportunities for education, socializing with peers and exposure to a wider environment, with potential life-long consequences. More positively, they may develop strong bonds with their younger siblings, which can be important in adult life (Levine *et al.*, 1994).

While such situations are largely driven by livelihood stress, which draws all able bodied family members into making a living, and prevents the development of reciprocal child care relationships, in many contexts, lack of safe, good quality, affordable childcare compounds the situation. Community child care centers (often in the home of a young mother), early childhood development programmes or pre-schools can provide alternatives that promote young children's development and wellbeing; in many cases, however, without some external support these may be unaffordable for the poorest families.

(b) *Participation and Development*

A child's development to his/her full potential also requires adult support, encouragement and guidance, informal education to develop ‘life-skills’, and good quality formal education, which widens

horizons and future employment opportunities. These 'inputs' require additional resources, most critically adequate material resources to free children's time to attend school and prevent the need to work, adult time to spend in informal education and care, and social connections to others who can care for children and support their development. All of these factors affect children's development of aspirations for the future, themselves a vital mechanism by which poverty may be transmitted or escaped. They are crucially influenced by the wider environment, including the public resources invested in education.

Participating in one's social (family, community) environment – both carrying out valued tasks and expressing opinions and contributing to making decisions – plays a key role in promoting children's development (Boyden, Ling & Myers, 1998; Woodhead, 1998a). It can help children develop essential skills, self-confidence and strong social connections, all of which are important in overcoming poverty. As the child becomes a young adult, participation in the wider world – economically, socially, and politically – increasingly becomes an essential part of a successful and productive life. The extent to which children and young people have opportunities for participation of this nature is affected (both positively and negatively) by household material assets, the social connectedness of a child's family, social and cultural traditions, the kind of education a child receives and personality.

Another important aspect of participation involves access to political processes and legal structures at local and national levels. These structures may be community based political organizations such as groups of elders, or state instituted structures such as local and national governments. Where children and young people have direct access to such structures, for example through youth councils linked to local governments, the experience can help build confidence, contacts and awareness of the wider world.¹¹ Adult access to decision-making institutions is also vital. Though participation by no means guarantees positive change for poor people it is unlikely that such changes will be achieved without it.

In this section we focus on education, childhood work, and attitudes and aspirations as mechanisms by which poverty cycles may be entrenched or broken.

(i) *Education*

Intuitively, a main means of escaping poverty is education, taken in its broadest sense (formal and informal schooling, skills training and knowledge acquisition). Knowledge and skills, and in many cases a formal qualification, can facilitate upward economic and social mobility, and general wellbeing. Education can offer a means to get a better-paying, safer job; to understand the instructions on a bag of fertilizer or bottle of medicine; to follow price trends in the newspapers and keep accounts; to extend one's social network into those who influence policy; and, to garner respect in one's own household and community. Education, particularly women's education, is also strongly associated with improved child health and nutrition and children's own educational success (MHHDC, 2000; Ray, 1999; Watkins, 2001). These benefits suggest that education can be a powerful way of breaking poverty cycles. The literature on education and development is enormous; here we discuss that which is most pertinent to poverty transfers mediated through childhood.

At the macro level, there is strong evidence supporting the widespread belief in education as a way out of poverty. Most analyses of East and South East Asia's relative economic success cite substantial investment in primary and secondary education as important factors enabling increased productivity and technological development (Wade, 1990; Watkins, 2001; Watt, 2000). Similarly, public investment in education has played a crucial role in promoting human development in Kerala, Cuba, Sri Lanka and Costa Rica (Mehrotra and Jolly, 1998), recognized to have some of the best levels of human wellbeing in comparison to per capita GDP.

The overall relationship between education and increased income is well established. For example, research in five Latin American countries found that people completing primary school could expect to earn 50 percent more in their first job than people who had not done so (IDB, 1999 cited in Watkins, 2001). However, the extent to which education translates into increased earnings depends both on labor market opportunities, and the extent to which individuals are able to access

them. Yaqub (2000) cites three studies (Trzcinski & Randolph 1991; Scott & Litchfield 1994; Baulch & McCulloch 1998) in which the relationship between education levels and income levels or mobility seem to be insignificant or asymmetric (i.e. education has no effect on relative upward mobility but lowers the chances of downward mobility). Wodon (1999) finds that in Bangladesh education has more impact on poverty in urban areas than in rural areas, principally because of greater labor market opportunities. Castañeda and Aldaz-Carroll (1999) note that for indigenous peoples in Latin America, discrimination in labor markets and limited opportunities for quality education mean that education is less strongly correlated with income than for other socio-economic groups. In Brazil and South Africa, a strong legacy of social inequality means that even declining educational inequality is not yet translating into reduced income inequality (Lam, 1999). Returns to education are often also gendered, but the extent and direction of effects is contextual – Deolalikar (1993) notes that in Indonesia men have much lower returns to secondary and tertiary education than women, while Vijverberg (1993) finds that in Côte d'Ivoire rates of return are high for both men and women, but men's wages are much higher than women's for all but the most educated.

As a result, despite the strong potential of education to break poverty cycles, and though there are significant differences between countries and regions,¹² there is generally a high association between parents' and children's levels of education (Castañeda & Aldaz-Carroll 1999), suggesting that overall there may be less mobility through education than popular belief implies. This association between parental and child educational status can work through several routes, many of which are poorly understood. Educated parents may be more likely to desire educated children, to understand the potential benefits of education, and to be able help with studies. Parental education also may be a proxy for parental wealth and/or class. Educated parents are more likely to be able to afford schooling and educational resources, nutritious food and a home environment suitable for study. They are less likely to require their children's labor, and less likely to have to pull children out of school during lean periods (Behrman, Birdsall & Székely 1998; Tabberer 1998). If, as discussed above, in addition to poor quality education there is demand for children's work and unskilled adult labor, but a limited market for or returns to semi-skilled labor, poor families – even if educated themselves – may see little value

in educating children. By contrast, educated parents are more likely to be members of an élite for whom it is self-evident that children must attend a particular school or type of school (Bourdieu, 1984).

Parental commitment to children's education is often gendered, with several studies suggesting that educated women value education in general, and girls' education in particular, more highly than uneducated women and are more likely, based on enhanced roles in decision-making and resource control, to educate their daughters (MHHDC, 2000). In other contexts, the picture is far more complex. Findings from a study of the rural Philippines suggest that daughters of better-educated fathers, and sons of landowning mothers, are favored with respect to education, although daughters' advantage with respect to education is compensated for by the preferential bestowal of land to sons (Quisumbing, 1997). Weir (2000) finds that in Ethiopia women's education has a positive effect on the enrolment of children in the neighborhood (i.e. not only their own children), particularly that of girls. Andersen (2000 and 2001) suggests that in Latin America, birth order is crucial with older children generally receiving less education than their younger siblings.

Overall, the evidence discussed here confirms the importance of education in breaking different aspects of poverty cycles. Enhancing and equalizing opportunities for both adult and children's education is thus a priority for policy. This requires substantial financial investments and a wider environment that prioritizes and enables this investment (see section 5) and sustained efforts to create skilled employment opportunities, particularly for young people who may otherwise be dissuaded from continuing in education. It also requires an enabling social context, involving public action, for example, to promote girls' education.

(ii) *Child work*

Under different circumstances, work in childhood may enable an individual or their family to get by, to escape poverty, or may perpetuate an intergenerational poverty cycle. Though by no means all poor children work, and though work is not confined to poor children, when work is understood as encompassing unpaid and domestic work as well work outside the home, it becomes clear that work is a critical factor in the lives of huge numbers of children. Research indicates that differences in the

kinds of work children undertake; local labor market opportunities for men, women, boys and girls; returns to education for different forms of skilled and unskilled labor; the specific conditions of particular types of employment; the opportunities children have for acquiring an education that will be of use to them in the future; the extent to which work endangers their health or safety; the social contacts they acquire through work; and the social relations established in the workplace are all important factors influencing the long-term impact of work in childhood (Anker *et al.*, 1998; Boyden, Ling & Myers, 1998; Ebdon, 2000; Fassa *et al.*, 2000; Moore, 2000; Woodhead, 1998b). Very little research has explored the intergenerational question – the effect of working in childhood on the likelihood that one’s own children will work. Wahba (2001) finds that in Egypt parents who were child workers are twice as likely to send their children, boys and girls, to work as parents who did not work in childhood. Evidence from several countries, including Ghana, Pakistan, Peru and Egypt indicates a strong correlation between low educational status among parents and children working (Balhota & Heady, 2000; Ray, 1999; Wahba, 2001), reinforcing the view that working in childhood is likely to lead to future poverty.

Existing research examining the impact of work on educational attendance and performance finds that working over a certain number of hours while attending school (10 to 20 hours per week in the UK and US) reduces children’s school attainment (Ebdon, 2000). Heady (2000) finds that Ghanaian child workers perform less well at both reading and mathematics than children attending school full-time, and the longer their work hours, the greater the effect. Binder and Scrogin (1999), by contrast, find that in urban Mexico, work had no significant effect on children’s academic achievement, but did eat substantially into their leisure time, with potential health consequences. Research in Latin America suggests that boys who start work between the ages of 13 and 17 receive on average two years’ less education than those who start work aged 18 to 24. This translates into 20 percent lower monthly wages for the rest of their lives, or losing between four and six times the income they could have gained if they had had two more years’ schooling (CEPAL, 1995 cited in Ebdon, 2000). This evidence does need to be set against the equally well documented finding that it is the income from paid work that enables some children to attend school (Ennew, 1995; Green, 1998;

Iverson, 2000), and thus to a potential break in intergenerational poverty cycles. Nevertheless, most evidence suggests that overall childhood work has a negative effect on educational attendance and achievement (Heady, 2000).

In the area of informal education and the acquisition of vocational skills, evidence is more mixed. Quantitative evidence could not be found. However, some qualitative evidence suggests that informal and practical skills acquired through childhood work can play a role in helping children escape poverty. For example, both boys and girls have found migration from the Sahel to West African towns and cities has enabled them to learn nationally useful languages, literacy, numeracy, and practical work skills, such as sewing or building (ENDA Jeunesse Action, 1999). Girls who migrate for work can build up dowries and secure more advantageous marriages on their return (Hitzemann & Touré, 2000), a phenomenon also observed by Naved *et al.* (2001) in Bangladesh. The relationship between migration and the opportunity to engage in potentially positive work is notable; it is urban opportunities to acquire socially valued skills with a good economic return and useful contacts that appear to be important.

Research on the long-term implications of work in childhood for future health status is even more limited. In a recent review, O'Donnell *et al.* (2002) conclude that the limited evidence suggests that working has more impact on children's morbidity than their growth. They find evidence from Brazil that child workers have poorer health in adulthood, and contradictory evidence from India on the growth effects of childhood work. Satyanarayana *et al.* (1986), in a longitudinal study of rural South Indian children, found that those who worked for wages in childhood were significantly stunted compared with those who did not work at all; O'Donnell *et al.* (2002) cite other studies that show no significant effects on growth. Effects of childhood work on health in later life may be direct – such as exposure to toxins that lead to later development of diseases, and through reducing educational attainment, also strongly linked with good health status (*ibid*).

Overall the literature suggests that child labor does play an important role in perpetuating poverty cycles. The weight of evidence suggests that enhancing school quality and accessibility,

particularly for girls, and adult education may be among the most important measures for encouraging adults and children to prioritize education over, or at least alongside, work (Heady, 2000; Balhota & Heady, 2000; Ray, 1999). A wide range of poverty reducing measures, which reduce the need for children to work are also crucial (Marcus and Harper, 1996), as is more effective regulation of working conditions (Moore, 2000).

Blanket policies regarding child work must be treated with caution. The context is important and if child work is a way out of poverty in the context of existing social relations (such as having the opportunity to live with a relative whose location also provides accessible education) or if it is important in relation to accessing opportunities (such as paying school fees) then simply enforcing bans is not a way out of poverty for the current generation. Future development goals, such as eradicating child work and mandatory full time education, must be moderated to fit the varied realities of different contexts.

(iii) Attitudes and aspirations

As observed in section 1, individual agency is one of several main factors involved in poverty transmission, mediating decisions about activities and strategies for coping with or escaping poverty. Experiences and contacts in childhood affect the development of attitudes and aspirations, including parents' expressed aspirations for their children, the attitudes and aspirations of peers, and children's and young people's experiences of school, work, social relationships, travel or migration, and opportunities for voice and participation, among others. As this wide range of influences suggests, attitudes and aspirations reflect ongoing influences, and thus may be more reversible than other intergenerational inheritances, such as poor nutrition.

Research has focused principally on the extent to which parents transmit to children attitudes that may be instrumental in maintaining or breaking cycles of poverty. This has been a particular concern in the US, where 'culture of poverty arguments' have caught the popular and policymakers' imagination and spawned substantial research. This has focused particularly on the extent and significance of transmission of attitudes that may lead to poverty – such as a limited work ethic or

viewing living on state benefits positively. Reviewing a range of studies, Corcoran (1995) finds the evidence inconclusive. She suggests that the structural factors of employment opportunities and race discrimination, which act as critical barriers to employment and income mobility, play a larger role overall. However, such evidence as exists would suggest that determination to overcome poverty may be an important factor. Datcher-Loury *et al.* (1989, cited in Yaqub, 2000) stress the important role of parental attitudes and motivations among poor black families in the US in making the most of meager resources. In this case, when parents determined to make the most of educational opportunities, worked with their children on homework, educational activities etc., the children's school attainment in both math and reading improved.

Overall, only limited research examines the development of poor young people's aspirations for the future. There is some evidence that children growing up in poverty may have more limited aspirations than their better off peers. In a context of continuous disappointment, low expectations can be considered a psychological coping strategy. Shropshire and Middleton (1999) find in the UK that children in low-income families tend to have lower aspirations than their better off peers, though they warn that a 'snapshot' study, such as theirs cannot predict how this plays out over time. Their findings are mirrored by Roker's (1998) work with low-income adolescents in the UK. Though possibly less ambitious than their middle-class counterparts, the children in both studies mostly aspired to a steady job and family life i.e. to the dominant socially-sanctioned model of a good life, and many viewed education as the way to get there.

Evidence from the few qualitative studies conducted with children in the South again suggests that children in poverty have varied aspirations for the future: that while some aspire simply to get by, others are enacting strategies to secure their futures, through work study, developing patron-client relations, or, in the case of adolescents, seeking advantageous marriages (Woodhead, 1998b; Baker, 1998). Children in urban Vietnam expressed clear resentment that their aspirations were being thwarted by not having enough money and being able to obtain only an inferior education, or none (Bond, 1999). Practitioner evidence from development projects that specifically aim to widen young peoples' horizons, and enhance their opportunities, through formal and informal education or through

activities involving participatory decision-making suggest that such interventions lead young people to develop new aspirations, and can help them escape poverty (Boyden, Ling & Myers, 1998). At the same time, as participatory poverty assessments (see Narayan *et al.* 2000) and observation have shown, in some cases children learn to moderate their ambitions, accepting conventional restrictions on boys' or girls' behavior, or viewing certain kinds of aspirations as appropriate for 'people like me'. What seems to matter is a combination of the child or young person's own personality, the support they receive from family members in their chosen strategies (Iversen, 2000) and the extent to which they are able to access wider opportunities and having witnessed others doing so, believe that they can do so too.

5. ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

The critical conditions of childhood that are important in lifecourse and intergenerational poverty transfers are linked to the issues of child survival, protection, development and participation. Whilst many factors contribute to children's overall development, nutrition, nurture, peace and stability, parental and child time (and therefore adequate assets), and education (and therefore assets) are all vital for a child's development and to prevent poverty transmissions. For these aspects to be productive two contexts need to exist. The first is that which enables individual participation in society through positive social relations and socio-political structures. The second is a wider enabling environment that presents opportunities for development, such as adequate labor markets and the state provision of public services. The former context has been discussed above in terms of social relations and participation. We now briefly turn to the latter.

The wider enabling environment is vast. For example, in relation to the generation and retention of financial assets to allow for child survival, protection and development a whole range of actions are needed, well documented in the development literature, and including (to name a few) the generation of non-exploitative adult labor markets, land distribution, asset retention, non-discriminatory inheritance law, and social safety nets. Providing these and adequate education requires tax collection, debt relief and reduced military spending to enable state financing, adequate provision

of and access to formal education for children, and adult education, and where necessary motivational campaigns and legal action to prevent discrimination against particular children.

Clearly, the wider enabling environment for tackling poverty transfers is too vast to discuss in detail here. However, each of the identified areas is well researched and in most contexts, connections are well understood: adults without adequate time and assets cannot adequately nurture their children; children in remote areas often cannot attend school; states without adequate resources cannot finance education. What is required is a prioritization of key areas combined with a recognition of the necessity to generate enabling contexts. At its most limited, adult labor markets, asset generation and retention and education are the key policy areas. From these flow a multitude of benefits for children but only in the context of positive social relations enabling participation and positive aspirations, peace and security, and a policy environment recognizing connections between the micro and macro and between specific policy areas. The context of the wider enabling environment is now discussed in terms of the priority it places on issues connected to childhood.

(a) *Policy integration*

In recent years, one of the most critical influences on childhood development and wellbeing has been the long term effect of purportedly short term austerity measures. The fiscal tightening and knock on effects of structural adjustment policies were supposed to have short term impacts of five to ten years. Not only is it clear that those impacts have, in some cases been deeper and longer than anticipated, there is substantial evidence of resulting damage to child nutrition, health and education (Cornia, 1995; AUSAID, 1999). As shown in this paper, harm or missed opportunities for children's development in these areas may be impossible or very difficult to overcome at some future time.

In terms of promoting child wellbeing and preventing poverty transfers, three areas of policy integration stand out. First, more substantial consideration of the potential impact of different policy choices on children. This requires recognition of the many ways in which economic stress can affect children and can perpetuate poverty cycles – importantly through its effects on context specific social relations, as well as directly through access to crucial services and family livelihoods. It also requires

commitment to actions that will enhance the wellbeing of the poorest families and children. Second, through ensuring greater integration between sectoral priorities, so that, for example, an agricultural policy promoting intensification of agriculture and requiring greater labor inputs does not conflict with education policy aiming for universal primary education. Third, a process of policy design that promotes coordination between different government departments, citizen voice and reduced 'transaction costs' to governments of coordinating with donors.

The last ten years have seen a range of initiatives intended to promote policy integration, including the moves towards budget support, sector wide programmes, Comprehensive Development Frameworks and most recently Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). In principle, PRSPs present an opportunity for developing more integrated policy, in terms of recognizing the potential social effects of macro policy choices, and in ensuring linkages between key sectoral elements, and through the process of their development. However, recent analysis suggests that their potential to improve the wellbeing of poor children and break poverty cycles is not being fully realized (Marcus, Wilkinson & Marshall, 2002). An analysis of six PRSPs and seventeen interim PRSPs indicated that preventing poverty transmission was never an explicit objective (Marcus & Wilkinson, 2002). Moreover, while children or particular groups of children were often flagged as a 'vulnerable group', policy to tackle their disadvantage was usually piecemeal, and not clearly related to broader economic strategies. Thus, several strategies proposed cash assistance or exemptions from service fees for children, but surprisingly few, mentioned nutritional support for young children¹³. All PRSPs discussed measures to boost access to and quality of basic health and education services. However, there was little integration between sectors, and thus potentially missed opportunities to prevent poverty transmissions.

Furthermore, these measures were almost always delinked from the broader set of policy choices, which may undermine the livelihoods and wellbeing of the poorest groups. In most cases, PRSPs appear to be relying principally on further economic liberalization to promote (principally foreign) investment and create growth, and then on growth trickling down. Other than important educational investments in disadvantaged regions, few poverty reduction strategies appear to

accompany liberalization measures with the kinds of redistributive measures that would ensure broad-based growth and help combat poverty cycles among the poorest groups (Cornia, 2000). Only one document, that of Honduras, specifically observed that economic reforms could have detrimental short-term impacts on vulnerable groups and proposed compensatory measures, while less than a quarter of PRSPs pay explicit attention to equity. In these cases, equity is principally addressed in terms of regional inequalities, rather than structural socio-economic inequalities that may be equally critical in the perpetuation of poverty cycles. Overall, it is not clear that either separately or with other plans, PRSPs represent comprehensive strategies to improve the situation of the poorest adults or children or to secure the wellbeing of future generations (Marcus, Wilkinson & Marshall, 2002).

However, it is still early days for PRSPs and other national poverty reduction planning processes. While striving for more pro-poor content, many observers, in civil organizations, sectoral ministries and ordinary citizens appreciate moves towards a different kind of poverty planning, which creates greater space for different priorities to be voiced, and acted upon. With specific regard to children, the involvement of civil organizations in policy dialogue in Honduras led to specific commitments on child labor. Some government and civil society observers in Ghana view the increased integration of planning and budgeting as important steps towards more holistic planning. In poor countries, where donors are aligning their support with national poverty reduction strategies, rather than financing separate projects, the potential for both more holistic and locally-determined and thus context-sensitive policy exists. These processes, despite their flaws, represent an important opportunity for improved policy.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has identified the most significant issues, connections and contexts pertinent to poverty transfers in childhood. In doing so it has covered both micro level social relations as a critical enabler, inhibitor or determinant of poverty transfers, as well as the macro level context that needs to prioritize and connect issues of childhood to create an enabling environment. Transfers across generations, between individuals or throughout an individual's lifecourse, whether of tangible assets,

such as land or debt, human capital such as nutritional care, education or disease, or attitudes and traditions, such as value systems and gender bias, are all sited in a context full of enabling or inhibiting mechanisms. It is only through understanding these contexts and prioritizing within them that poverty transfers can be halted.

Notes

¹ Other reasons include the vast numbers affected.

² See Moore (2001) for a more detailed discussion of an assets approach to intergenerational poverty.

³ See www.unicef.org.uk/issues/rights3.htm, accessed on 26/08/02 for further information.

⁴ Mayer (1997) disputes the importance of family economic resources, *per se*, suggesting from her analysis of PSID data that family support, or ‘parenting style’ are much more important. She is careful not to extend this conclusion beyond the USA.

⁵ Examples include the US Panel Study of Income Dynamics and the UK’s National Child Development Survey.

⁶ Two studies which should, over time, help remedy this, are the ongoing South African Birth to Twenty study, which is analyzing the changing fortunes of a cohort of Johannesburg children (www.wits.ac.za/birthto20/) and the Young Lives project, which intends to follow approximately 2000 children from birth to fifteen in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam (www.younglives.org.uk).

⁷ Shahin Yaqub, personal communication.

⁸ Ironically, children growing up with their fathers but no mothers have received very little attention, despite the evidence in some countries, that such children are often particularly deprived (Government

of Mongolia/World Bank, 2001; Harper, 1995; MHHDC 2000), and there may be substantial intergenerational effects.

⁹ Other factors include gender discrimination in food allocation, taboos against pregnant women and young children consuming certain foods and wealth-related obesity.

¹⁰ Evidence on the extent to which poor fetal growth is related to future disease is contested, with many studies finding strong effects (e.g. Godfrey and Barker, 2000) and the weight of policy opinion inclined to this view (ACC/SCN, 2000; James Commission, 2000), while other studies find no significant relationship (Krishnaswamy *et al.*, 2002; Rasmussen, 2001)

¹¹ See for example, www.workingchild.org, accessed on 2 September 2002.

¹² See Behrman, Gaviria and Székely (2001) for a comparison between intergenerational educational and occupational mobility between the US and several Latin American countries.

¹³ And, when they did, such measures were only to be targeted at orphans, street children and child-headed households.

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