



The definition of child poverty: a discussion of concepts and measurements

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ABSTRACT This paper presents and discusses different concepts of child poverty, alternative definitions of children living in poverty, and measurement efforts in this regard. It addresses such questions as: who are the children living in poverty? Is the issue of children living in poverty recognized by and incorporated into anti-poverty strategies? Have governments, civil society organizations and international organizations identified and adopted policies to reduce child poverty? And is the situation of girls living in poverty taken into account? Several organizations have recently adopted human rights-based approaches to defining children living in poverty, and these definitions are included here. In general, however, the assessment finds that there is a lack of consideration of children's issues in the debate on poverty. The lack of visibility has negative implications for anti-poverty strategies, which seldom consider that children and their rights are central to their design and implementation. In this paper, we argue that the lack of conceptualization and debate on the specificities of child poverty has enormous consequences for policy and, vice versa, that the income generation and sectoral focus of poverty reduction policies discourages a holistic response to children and families.

KEYWORDS child policies / child poverty / child rights / human rights / poverty reduction

I. INTRODUCTION⁽¹⁾

The world is falling short of its promise and commitment to ensure that every child enjoys a safe and nurturing childhood. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which came into force in 1989, provides children – in both rich and poor countries – with the right to a childhood in which they can learn, play, enjoy full health and develop to their potential. However, 15 years after the adoption of the Convention, and after more than 15 years of market-led economic growth, governments and the international community are still far from fulfilling children's rights and creating a world fit for children.

According to UNICEF, over half of the children in the developing world live in poverty.⁽²⁾ This level of child deprivation is not taken into account in the growing dialogue on anti-poverty policies or in the current debate on the definition of poverty. The widely accepted monetary approach to identifying and measuring poverty is being challenged by other multi-disciplinary approaches; for instance, the human rights-based

approach, the basic needs approach and the capability approach. However, this debate does not differentiate the concept of child poverty, or focus on the different needs and vulnerabilities of children living in poverty. Not only has child poverty been excluded from the debate but it has also been invisible in the efforts to measure and tackle poverty. The lack of conceptualization and debate on the specificities of child poverty has enormous consequences on policy and, vice versa, the income generation and sectoral focus of poverty reduction policies discourages a holistic vision of children and families. While other debates regarding poverty have significant implications for children living in poverty, this paper focuses on issues related to an explicit recognition of child poverty.⁽³⁾

This paper provides an overview of this issue. We discuss how organizations – academic, public, private, domestic, local and international – are at present defining and measuring child poverty, and what their proposals are for addressing the special needs of children and for reducing the impact of poverty on children. The underlying objective of the paper is to influence the debate on poverty so as to give to the issue of children living in poverty the centrality and specificity that it deserves. This is not only a moral and ethical issue but also a crucial step in the path to eliminating poverty.

The paper has three substantive sections after this introduction. Section II presents a summary of different definitions of child poverty, and conceptual frameworks that shape child poverty action plans. The assessment finds that not many organizations give particular consideration to the issue of children and poverty. However, the few that define child poverty identify it as a multi-dimensional phenomenon that requires direct policy intervention. The research also finds that in these cases, human rights principles are important factors in shaping child poverty definitions and action plans.

Section III presents two approaches to measuring child poverty. The first is the deprivation approach, which establishes a set of basic services and capabilities and then measures the number of children who do not have access to this same “basket” of services and capabilities. The second is the monetary approach, which uses an income-based poverty line to identify poverty.⁽⁴⁾ Given the evidence presented, we discuss the need for and viability of conceptualizing and measuring child poverty, the relevance of making it visible and the importance of linking it with policy design and implementation. As the examples presented suggest, the definition and measurement of children living in poverty that should be adopted must follow a rights-based approach.

Section IV introduces a discussion on the links between concepts and measures and policies. An inclusion of the measurement and monitoring of child poverty in the larger debate would have an impact on policy, as evidence from several sources shows. This last section stresses the urgent need to introduce the concept and multi-dimensional measure of child poverty in the current policy debate, and to re-direct programmes for poverty reduction to ensure that family and children are given the priority they deserve. The conclusion emphasizes the need for action and implementation of child poverty measures and policies.

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1. This paper is based on a document elaborated by the authors as background to the International Conference "Children and Poverty: Global Context, Local Solutions?" organized by UNICEF and the Graduate Programme in International Affairs, New School University, 25–27 April 2005, New York. We would like to thank Liz Gibbons, Gaspar Fajth, Sita Haldipur and Sherry Bartlett for their support and comments. The usual disclaimer applies.

2. UNICEF (2005b), *The State of the World of the Children 2005 – Childhood under Threat*, UNICEF, New York.

3. There are several terms used to describe the hardships of child poverty, including "child poverty", "childhood poverty" and "children living in poverty". These expressions aim to refine the discourse on poverty and children. While it is recognized that they have different working definitions, and that probably the most accurate wording would be "children living in poverty", for purposes of style, these terms are used interchangeably throughout this paper.

4. On the various approaches to poverty in general, see, among others, Wratten, E (1995), "Conceptualizing urban poverty", *Environment & Urbanization* Vol 7, No 1, April, pages 11–36; also Boltvinik,

II. DEFINING CHILD POVERTY

a. Limits of the traditional approach

Child poverty is usually conceived as the poverty experienced by children and young people. It differs from adult poverty in that it can have different causes. It can also have different effects and these effects may have a permanent impact on children.⁽⁵⁾ Even short periods of deprivation can affect children's long-term growth and development. As UNICEF describes it:

"Children experience poverty as an environment that is damaging to their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual development. Therefore, expanding the definition of child poverty beyond traditional conceptualizations, such as low household income or low levels of consumption, is particularly important. And yet, child poverty is rarely differentiated from poverty in general and its special dimensions are seldom recognized."⁽⁶⁾

There is no uniform approach to defining, identifying or measuring poverty. The debate over poverty is concerned with different potential causes of poverty and ways in which poverty can be measured and compared nationally and internationally. The monetary approach, which is the most widely used approach to identifying and measuring poverty, focuses poverty reduction strategies on increasing individuals' incomes.⁽⁷⁾ Notwithstanding the widespread use of the monetary approach, several development organizations see poverty as a phenomenon that cannot be defined only in monetary terms.⁽⁸⁾ They recognize that poverty is multi-faceted and cannot be measured and resolved only through monetary means. In particular, organizations that work on child poverty issues view poverty as a multi-faceted problem that requires comprehensive strategies to address its many features.

There are many reasons why the monetary approach is not appropriate to measuring child poverty. For example, it gives little consideration to household structure, gender and age. It ignores the fact that children's needs are different from those of adults.⁽⁹⁾ The standard monetary solution of increasing the individual income level ignores the fact that some household members are discriminated against and may not be given a proportional share of household income.⁽¹⁰⁾ For instance, when children work, a family's income often rises above the poverty line. These children are deprived, yet according to the traditional income approach, they would not be considered poor. Also, numerous studies have shown that within households, "... the burden of poverty [is] being unequally heaped in accordance with age and gender biases that adversely affect women and children in particular."⁽¹¹⁾

Furthermore, the monetary approach neglects to note that children's well-being also depends on non-market-based goods. Access to basic services and a safe environment for play is generally more dependent on the level of local provision than on household income. Thus, individuals cannot purchase these goods even if they have sufficient income. Not only do these non-monetary aspects affect children's well-being but they also tend to have a disproportionate effect on children. Children under five, for instance, experience more than 80 per cent of the diarrhoeal diseases related to the inadequate provision of water and

sanitation – diseases that remain a major cause of both death and illness for all age groups. Over 70 per cent of the health burden from helminth (worm) infections, also related to poor provision, is carried by children aged 5–14. Because of their drive for play, children are also disproportionately affected by the adverse health conditions created by poor drainage and waste collection. Play in hazardous environments also results in much higher rates of preventable injury for children, and especially for children in poverty. Overcrowded living conditions, stressful for all age groups, have been particularly related to poor cognitive development, behavioural problems, lower motivation and delayed psychomotor development for children. The impact on children of a range of environmental deprivations (as well as deprivation in nutrition and health care) is especially critical because of the long-term developmental implications.⁽¹²⁾

Because of the disproportionate effects on children of environments that are related to inadequate provision, the monetary approach is clearly inappropriate for identifying and measuring child poverty. However, as in the debate over the exact definition of poverty, there is no set definition of child poverty, hence this paper attempts to summarize different characterizations of child poverty used by organizations working directly on children's issues. As mentioned above, these definitions are based on a combination of concepts of the deprivation approach to identifying and measuring child poverty and human rights principles.

b. The human rights framework and the definition of poverty

The human rights-based approach to poverty endeavours to integrate human rights concepts, analysis, values and language into the poverty reduction dialogue. The approach holds that the objectives of anti-poverty strategies should be guided by international human rights laws and values.⁽¹³⁾ Because international human rights laws have been formally recognized by almost all countries, and are reinforced by legal obligations, the human rights-based approach provides a compelling and explicit normative framework to guide national and international policies' anti-poverty programmes.⁽¹⁴⁾

One aspect of the human rights-based approach to poverty is the empowerment of the poor. The concept of rights gives the poor the opportunity, as rights holders, to claim from their governments the policies that will improve their lives. "*Poverty reduction then becomes more than charity, more than a moral obligation – it becomes a legal obligation.*"⁽¹⁵⁾ This has important implications for the politics of policy and the implementation of programmes (with regard, for instance, to such issues as universality, avoidance of clientelism, etc.) and budget allocations without which the laws are merely dead letters on a piece of paper.⁽¹⁶⁾

As a contribution to the empowerment of the poor, the human rights-based approach includes several salient features: an emphasis on accountability, the principles of non-discrimination and equality, and the principle of participatory decision-making processes. These features aim to ensure that anti-poverty strategies are more than window dressing, that marginalized groups are not excluded, and that the poor are included in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction strategies. This is a holistic approach. When their civil and political rights are ensured, the poor will have a better chance (alone or through

Julio (1998), "Poverty measurement methods – an overview", in SEPED Series on Poverty Reduction, UNDP, New York, accessed 25 January 2005 at http://www.undp.org/poverty/publications/pov_red/Poverty_Measurement_Methods.pdf; and Ruggeri, C, R Saith and F Stewart (2003), "Everyone agrees we need poverty reduction, but not what this means: does it matter?" WIDER, Helsinki.

5. CHIP (2004), "Children and poverty – some questions answered", in *Children and Poverty*, CHIP Briefing 1, London, accessed 21 February 2005 at <http://www.childhoodpoverty.org/index.php?action=documentfeed/doctype=pdf/id=46/>; also UNDP (2004), "Dollar a day, how much does it say?" *In Focus*, an online bulletin of the UNDP–International Poverty Centre (IPC), New York, September, accessed 21 February 2005 at <http://www.undp.org/povertycentre/newsletters/infocus4sep04eng.pdf>.

6. UNICEF (2005a), "Defining child poverty", accessed 21 February 2005 at <http://www.unicef.org/sowc05/english/povertyissue.html>.

7. Vandemoortele, J (2000), "Absorbing social shocks, protecting children and reducing poverty", UNICEF, New York, accessed 21 February 2005 at http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/Global_2000_Absorbing_Social_Shocks.pdf.

8. It is interesting to note that even Adam Smith had a broad concept in mind when he wrote: "*Every man is rich or poor according to the degree in which he can afford to enjoy the necessities, conveniences and amusements of human life*", which clearly indicates that he was thinking about the ability to live a full and enjoyable life in order not to be considered poor. See Smith,

A (1776), *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Fifth edition (1904) edited by Edwin Cannan and published by Methuen & Co Ltd).

9. See reference 7; also Minujin, Alberto (2005), "Constructing a definition and measurements of children living in poverty", GPS contribution to IRC meeting on Child Poverty in CEE/CIS, 24 January 2005, Florence, Italy.

10. See reference 9, Minujin (2005).

11. Feeny, Thomas and Jo Boyden (2003), "Children and poverty: a review of contemporary literature and thought on children and poverty", in *Children and Poverty Series, Part I*, Christian Children's Fund, Richmond, accessible at http://www.christianchildrensfund.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/7659_Poverty%20Pt%201.pdf.

12. See, for instance, Bartlett, S (2002), *Children's Rights and the Physical Environment*, Save the Children Sweden, Stockholm; also Satterthwaite, D et al. (1996), *The Environment for Children*, Earthscan, London.

13. OHCHR (2002), *Draft Guidelines: A Human Rights Approach to Poverty Reduction Strategies*, UN, New York.

14. See reference 13.

15. See reference 13.

16. There is also an important rhetorical effect. Even if the poor cannot take the government to court in order to implement specific policies or programmes (i.e. the problem of justiciability of some social or economic rights), the recognition of these rights allows for political pressure to be built up in order to set up or change policies and resource allocations. Clearly, this is not an automatic

political alliances) to influence their governments to adopt anti-poverty strategies that will help them live decent and independent lives. Thus, these rights are considered "instrumental" rights, i.e. rights that help in the fight against poverty, although their absence does not define or constitute poverty.

As for identifying the poor, that is, for measurement and analysis, the human rights-based approach looks at constitutive rights – those rights, in other words, without which a person is considered poor.⁽¹⁷⁾ The list of these rights may differ from one country to another, but based on empirical observation, the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) developed a common set of rights that apply to most countries:

- being adequately nourished;
- being able to avoid preventable morbidity and premature mortality;
- being adequately sheltered;
- having basic education;
- being able to appear in public without shame;
- being able to earn a livelihood; and
- taking part in the life of a community.

This list can be used to identify the poor, to learn more about their exact needs, and to evaluate the success of poverty reduction strategies. Moreover, implicit in the definition of poverty based on the non-fulfillment of rights is the assumption that governments have the legal responsibility to fulfill these rights, as the ultimate duty bearers.⁽¹⁸⁾

c. In search of a definition of children living in poverty

UNICEF, based on the human rights approach and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, defines child poverty as the deprivation of a range of both material and social supports and services that it considers to be essential to ensure children's well-being. UNICEF's working definition of child poverty, presented in *The State of the World's Children*, is:

"Children living in poverty [are those who] experience deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal members of society."⁽¹⁹⁾

According to UNICEF, ". . . this definition suggests that the poverty children experience with their hands, minds and hearts is interrelated." For example, material poverty leads to malnutrition, which in turn affects health and education, which in turn may impact a child's long-term development. Furthermore, to address the lack of financial resources, children from poor households may be engaged in child labour, which may negatively impact a child's cognitive and physical development by depriving the child of school. In essence, UNICEF's definition stresses the multi-dimensional and interrelated nature of child poverty.

UNICEF's definition also suggests that economic security is only one of the many components in addressing child poverty. "Other aspects of material deprivation, like access to basic services, as well as issues related to discrimination and exclusion that affect self-esteem and psychological development, among others, are also central to the definition of child poverty."⁽²⁰⁾

Acting on this definition, UNICEF adopts and promotes measures and policies that address the different components of child poverty. Furthermore, as mentioned above, UNICEF is also an advocate of a human rights-based approach to defining child poverty, which holds that eliminating child poverty will help in the realization of children's rights.

The **Christian Children's Fund (CCF)** has also endeavoured to define child poverty in concrete terms that can guide policies to reduce child poverty. In 2002, it commissioned a study on the experience and impact of poverty on children.⁽²¹⁾ As part of this effort, CCF consulted with children and their families to learn directly from them how children experienced poverty.

CCF found that the generally accepted definition of poverty – *"The state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possession"*⁽²²⁾ – gives rise to two concepts that are important to rethinking the definition and measurement of child poverty. First, that poverty is relative across time and societies; and second, *"... that poverty is conceived in terms of the ability to purchase goods and services [money] or their ownership [material possessions]."*⁽²³⁾ These concepts led to the widely accepted practice of identifying and measuring poverty through a monetary poverty line that, as mentioned above and echoed by the CCF report, is inadequate for measuring child poverty. Children lack access to and control over income, and to gauge a child's well-being by consumption at the household level is wrong because it neglects the fact that children do not necessarily benefit proportionately from a household's income or consumption. Furthermore, monetary solutions focus on physical aspects, and neglect such intangible aspects of poverty as the feeling of insecurity, lack of freedom from harassment and abuse, and social exclusion.⁽²⁴⁾ Thus, CCF sees child poverty as a multi-dimensional phenomenon that is made up of both tangible and intangible components.

CCF has found that poverty is a deeply relational and relative dynamic, and a multi-dimensional experience for children. In developing a conceptual framework for understanding how poverty affects children and how to improve actions towards alleviating their situation, CCF defines three different but interrelated domains that provide an holistic and comprehensive understanding of ways in which poverty affects children. One relevant domain is that of access to adequate basic social services and satisfactory material conditions for a life of dignity. This domain is the one usually covered under the concept of deprivation. CCF's study also showed that children are strongly affected by the experience of discrimination in everyday life, and feel excluded on the basis of their age, gender, class, caste, etc. Exclusion is the second domain considered by CCF. Finally, it is well known that children are a most vulnerable group in the face of a crisis. From natural disasters and conflicts to economic shocks, crises tend to affect children (and women) disproportionately. They are vulnerable to the increasing array of threats in their environments that can result from any of these conditions. CCF, therefore, views child poverty as embracing these three interrelated domains:

- **deprivation:** a lack of material conditions and services generally held to be essential to the development of children's full potential;
- **exclusion:** the result of unjust processes through which children's

process. Laws, by themselves, may be limited in their capacity to produce social change. Nevertheless, they are a major contribution in the long struggle to eliminate poverty.

17. Some rights can be simultaneously instrumental and constitutive.

18. The human rights approach recognizes that governments, especially in Less Developed Countries (LDCs), have limited resources, and it allows for the progressive, staged realization of a poverty reduction strategy. However, it does stress that governments must commit to a poverty reduction strategy that explicitly sets out to progressively meet the human rights to which the poor are entitled.

19. See reference 2.

20. See reference 9, Minujin (2005).

21. See reference 11.

22. Kanbur, R and L Squire (1999), "The evolution of thinking about poverty: exploring the interactions", World Bank Paper cited in Feeny and Boyden (2003), see reference 11.

23. See reference 11.

24. See reference 11.

25. CCF (2004), "Understanding how children experience and respond to poverty", Christian Children Fund presentation at UNICEF, New York; also, see reference 9, Minujin (2005).

dignity, voice and rights are denied, or their existence threatened; and

- **vulnerability:** an inability of society to cope with existing or probable threats to children in their environment.⁽²⁵⁾

CCF's definition of child poverty leads to its commitment to support comprehensive poverty reduction strategies that recognize the unique nature of child poverty and also encourage a participatory approach that includes children's voices.

The Childhood Poverty Research and Policy Centre (CHIP) is a joint project between Save the Children UK and the Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC). In its document, "Children and poverty – some questions answered", CHIP offers the following definition of child poverty:

"Childhood poverty means children and young people growing up without access to different types of resources that are vital for their well-being and for them to fulfill their potential. By resources we mean economic, social, cultural, physical, environmental and political resources."⁽²⁶⁾

26. See reference 5, CHIP (2004).

More specifically, this definition implies that growing up in the absence of any of the factors listed below constitutes childhood poverty:

- **an adequate livelihood** – the financial and nutritional resources needed for survival and development (economic, physical and environmental resources);
- **opportunities for human development** – including access to quality education and life skills, health and water/sanitation (social, cultural and physical resources);
- **family and community structures that nurture and protect them** – parents/guardians with time (or ability/desire) to care for them; an extended family/community that can cope if parents and guardians are not able (or not there); or a community that cares for and protects its younger generation (social and cultural resources); and
- **opportunities for voice** – powerlessness and lack of voice (political resources) often underpin other aspects of poverty (this also applies to adults).

As in the case of UNICEF, CHIP's child poverty definition is multi-faceted, and stresses that the different aspects of child poverty are inter-related; and like UNICEF, CHIP supports comprehensive anti-poverty strategies that address the different aspects of child poverty.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is another organization that uses a human rights-based approach in its child poverty action plan. "This approach is based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which views girls and boys as fully fledged persons who are active, able and necessary participants in their own development and that of their communities."⁽²⁷⁾

27. CIDA (2004a), "Child protection", Canada International Development Agency, Quebec, accessed 21 February 2005 at <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/childprotection>.

Furthermore, CIDA sees human rights violations as resulting from child poverty: "Poverty prevents children from reaching their full potential. It denies them human rights – like those related to education, health and nutrition, participation in decisions that affect their lives, and freedom from abuse, exploitation and discrimination".⁽²⁸⁾ CIDA, like many development agencies, relies on the monetary approach to identify

28. See reference 27.

and measure children living in poverty. It cites a UN study that claims that 40 per cent of all children in the least developed countries are struggling to survive on less than US\$ 1 per day.⁽²⁹⁾

Even though it relies on a monetary approach to measure child poverty, CIDA supports a human rights-based approach as an effective poverty reduction strategy. "*Realizing children's rights is essential to reducing poverty in a sustainable way. And protecting the most vulnerable children – who are often neglected by traditional interventions in health, education and nutrition – is key to realizing children's rights.*"⁽³⁰⁾

Save the Children Sweden also makes a strong connection between child poverty and human rights. It argues that fighting child poverty is much more than a development concern; it is a human rights concern. Furthermore, like CIDA, Save the Children uses a monetary approach to identify children living in poverty, and proposes a human rights approach to design anti-poverty policies that address child poverty. Because there is a link between child poverty and human rights, anti-poverty strategies should be ". . . based explicitly on the norms and values set out in international human rights law."⁽³¹⁾

Save the Children's human rights-based approach is anchored on the "A World Fit for Children" resolution adopted by the General Assembly during the UN's 2002 Special Session on Children.⁽³²⁾ This clearly indicates Save the Children's view that child poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that needs to be grounded in a comprehensive human rights-based approach.

The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) is a national NGO that has examined the relationship between children's rights, state budgets and poverty reduction. In a 2000 study,⁽³³⁾ IDASA defined child poverty in terms of four categories of suffering/deprivation. These are:

- **insufficient income and income-earning opportunities:** the study refers here to children suffering because the low level of household income affects their access to necessities and limits their consumption and opportunities;
- **lack of human development opportunities:** the reference here is to children lacking access to social and basic services such as health, education, sanitation services and recreational facilities, and to the impact of this lack of access;
- **feelings of economic and physical insecurity:** economic insecurity refers to children's concerns about fluctuations in household income (unemployment) and access to public services. Physical insecurity is related to abuse, child labour, the vulnerability experienced by orphans, and so on; and
- **feelings of powerlessness:** the reference here is to children feeling oppressed within the family unit and feeling excluded from, or scorned by, the community.

DASA developed its broad definition of child poverty through a participatory effort in which it first consulted with some of South Africa's children on what it means to be poor, incorporating their voices. Second, IDASA considered the definitions used by international poverty researchers, and lastly, it ". . . drew upon the definition of poverty implicit in the Convention on the Rights of the Child."⁽³⁴⁾

29. CIDA (2004b), "The challenges facing children", Canada International Development Agency, Quebec, accessed 21 February 2005 at http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cida_ind.nsf/f1b522f51afeefda8525697d005cce33/79ff9190d6765b5885256a69005ffe6f?OpenDocument#Children%20and%20poverty.

30. See reference 29.

31. Save the Children Sweden (2003), "Children first in the poverty battle: a review of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers in the Southern African Region – from a child rights perspective", accessed 21 February 2005 at http://www.undp.org/povertycentre/publications/vulnerability/children/Children_FirstinPRSP-SavetheChildren-Mar03.pdf.

32. UN (2002), Resolution by the General Assembly: A World fit for Children, New York, available at http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/docs_new/documents/A-RES-S27-2E.pdf.

33. Cassiem, S, H Perry, M Sadan and J Streak (2000), "Child poverty and the budget 2000 – are poor children put first?" Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), Cape Town.

34. Streak, Judith (2000), "Child poverty and the budget in South Africa", Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), Cape Town, accessed 21 February 2005 at http://www.hri.ca/children/welfare/SAfrica_povertybudget.pdf.

d. Assessment

Not many organizations have dealt directly with the issue of defining child poverty. Only a few have been mentioned here precisely because there are only a few. Rather than being seen as a representative sample, the definitions discussed here should be considered a description of the “state of the art”.

All these definitions share some common elements (voice, participation, multi-dimensionality). In other words, they implicitly or explicitly incorporate human rights precepts and notions. Moreover, although gender is not mentioned explicitly, this framework does recognize that powerlessness and discrimination affect girls and boys differently, and this could and should be taken into account when measuring child poverty.

However, it is possible that these definitions are too broad and expansive. In the attempt to incorporate various dimensions in the definition of poverty, there is a risk of diluting the core meaning of poverty (associated with material deprivation). While lack of voice, physical abuse, family break-up and other problems are serious impediments to the healthy enjoyment of childhood and to the full development of children, they do not necessarily constitute poverty nor are they associated with lack of income or basic needs.

III. CHILD POVERTY MEASUREMENTS AND FINDINGS

Poverty is not easily measurable. The multi-dimensional nature of poverty includes quantifiable variables (such as income, consumption and access to basic services), but it also includes capabilities variables that may not be so easily measurable – such as the capability to participate in society without facing discrimination.⁽³⁵⁾ Because of these complexities, most development agencies rely on the monetary approach to measure poverty (the poverty line), which is a very partial and, in many ways, a counter-productive approach to measuring poverty. This is because:

- it ignores the multi-dimensional nature of poverty;
- it uses a single income-based poverty line to identify the poor, neglecting the different characteristics of households;
- it overlooks the different needs of people – for instance, a disabled person may need more resources than a person without disabilities to accomplish the same tasks;
- it disregards the importance of public services and public goods, such as education, health care, water, sanitation and so on; and
- it concentrates anti-poverty strategies on increasing an individual's income level rather than on investing in public services.

This section will present a summary of the methodologies and results of some international and national efforts to measure child poverty.

a. Child poverty as child rights violations – Bristol study

The deprivation approach to measuring poverty looks at a set of observable and demonstrable disadvantages. According to UNICEF: “*The notion of deprivation focuses attention on the circumstances that surround children, casting poverty as an attribute of the environment they live and grow in.*”⁽³⁶⁾

35. Sen, A (1999), *Development as Freedom*, Random House, New York.

36. See reference 2.

A team of researchers from the University of Bristol and the London School of Economics were commissioned by UNICEF to conduct an empirical study on how children fare with respect to seven measures of severe deprivation. This study is “. . . *the first ever scientific measurement of the extent and depth of child poverty in all the developing regions of the world.*”⁽³⁷⁾ The measures of deprivation are based on child rights and definitions of poverty internationally agreed at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. The indicators and their thresholds are:

- **severe food deprivation:** children whose height and weight for their age were more than three standard deviations below the median of the international reference population, that is, severe anthropometric failure;
- **severe water deprivation:** children who only had access to surface water (for example, rivers) for drinking, or who lived in households where the nearest source of water was more than 15 minutes away (indicators of severe deprivation of water quality or quantity);
- **severe deprivation of sanitation facilities:** children who had no access to a toilet of any kind in the vicinity of their dwelling, that is, no private or communal toilets or latrines;
- **severe health deprivation:** children who had not been immunized against any diseases, or young children who had recently suffered from an illness involving diarrhoea and had not received any medical advice or treatment;
- **severe shelter deprivation:** children in dwellings with more than five people per room (severe overcrowding) or with no flooring material (for example, a mud floor);
- **severe educational deprivation:** children aged 7–18 who had never been to school and were not currently attending school (no professional education of any kind); and
- **severe information deprivation:** children aged 3–18 with no access to radio, television, telephone or newspapers at home.

The study found that 56 per cent of children in low- and middle-income countries – just over one billion children – suffered from one or more forms of severe deprivation. South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa had severe deprivation rates of more than 80 per cent. More poignantly, rural children in these two regions had severe deprivation rates of more than 90 per cent. In a population of more than 1.8 billion children in low- and middle-income countries, some of the most salient results are as follows (by deprivation indicator):

- **severe food deprivation:** 15 per cent of children aged under five in low- and middle-income countries are severely food deprived;
- **severe water deprivation:** nearly 376 million children, 20 per cent, do not have access to safe water sources, or have more than a 15-minute walk to water;
- **severe deprivation of sanitation facilities:** more than half a billion children, 31 per cent, suffer from sanitation deprivation;
- **severe health deprivation:** 265 million children, 15 per cent, suffer from health deprivation;
- **severe shelter deprivation:** more than 500 million children, 34 per cent, suffer from shelter deprivation;
- **severe educational deprivation:** 134 million children aged 7–18, 13 per cent, have never been to school; and

37. Gordon, D, S Nandy, C Pantazis, S Pemberton and P Townsend (2003), *Child Poverty in the Developing World*, The Policy Press, Bristol, accessed 21 February 2005 at http://aa.ecn.cz/img_upload/65636e2e7a707261766f64616a737476/Child_poverty.pdf.

- **severe information deprivation:** almost half a billion children, 25 per cent, suffer from information deprivation.

These results indicate that the majority of children in developing countries are suffering from some form of severe deprivation that will adversely impact their development.

More localized deprivation studies can be effective tools for policy makers. Results can provide clear indications of the exact needs of children living in poverty. "Localized" need not be interpreted purely in regional terms; it can also mean an analysis in terms of issues or gender. For instance, Figure 1 shows the different conditions of girls and boys in terms of various deprivations.

Finally, it can be mentioned that the one of the great virtues of the evidence gathered by the Bristol team is that it can be contrasted with other measurements of poverty. For example, Figure 2 shows that not only is there no relation between the number of people struggling to survive on less than \$US 1 a day and the percentage of severely deprived children, but also that the latter is consistently greater than the former. Out of nearly 40 countries for which comparable data were available, in only two cases are the dots (representing the percentage of severely deprived children) below the 45-degree line. This means that in almost all cases, the estimator of child deprivation is considerably higher than that for income poverty. In other words, the "dollar a day" measure that, among other problems, does not distinguish children from adults, seriously underestimates child poverty. A similar conclusion applies to the national poverty lines, although the underestimation is less pronounced.⁽³⁸⁾

38. Minujin Alberto, Enrique Delamonica and Phoebe Wong (2006), "Exploring the properties of child poverty indicators in various socioeconomic contexts", UNICEF-DPP Working Paper Series, New York.

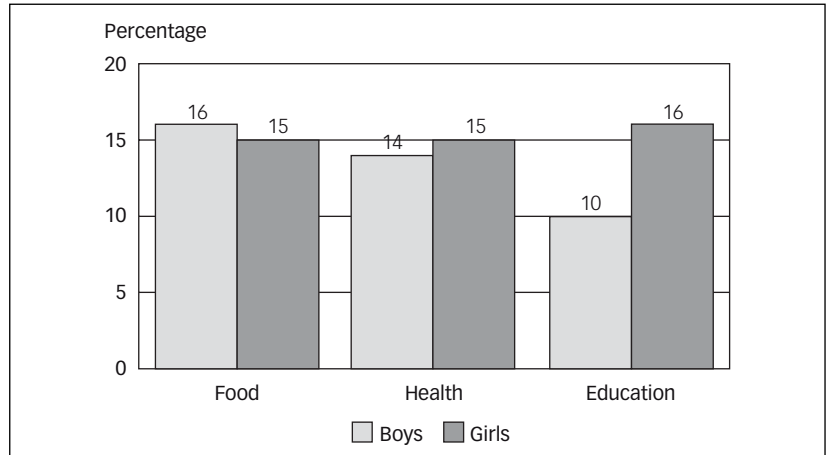


FIGURE 1
Percentage of girls and boys severely deprived

SOURCE: Gordon, D, S Nandy, C Pantazis, S Pemberton and P Townsend (2003), *Child Poverty in the Developing World*, The Policy Press, Bristol, accessed 21 February 2005 at http://aa.ecn.cz/img_upload/65636e2e7a707261766f64616a737476/Child_poverty.pdf.

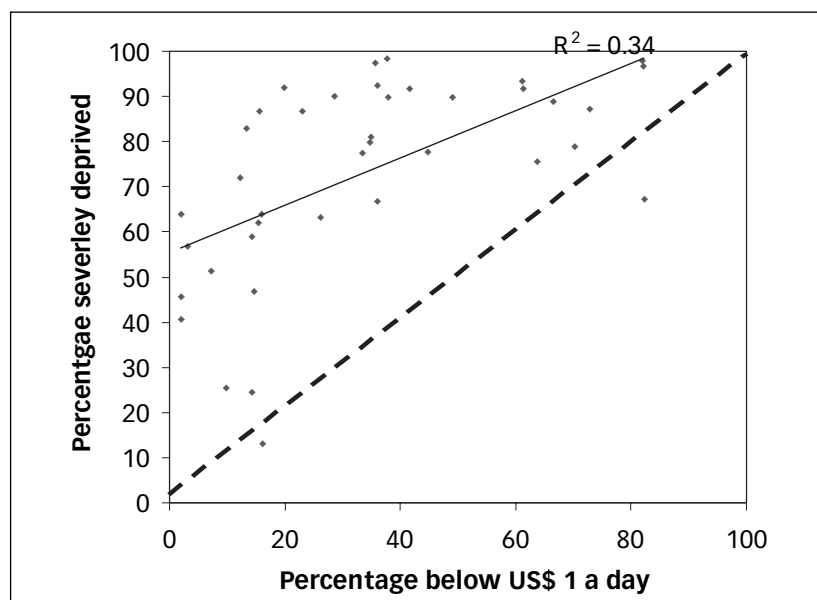


FIGURE 2

Low correlation of the percentage of severely deprived children and the percentage of total population struggling to survive on less than US\$ 1 a day

Note: The dots in this figure indicate the percentage of severely deprived children in each of 40 countries relative to the percentage of people struggling to survive on less than US\$ 1 a day. The dotted line shows the points where these percentages would be equal. The solid line shows the "best fit" between the two indicators.

SOURCE: Minujin Alberto, Enrique Delamonica and Phoebe Wong (2006), "Exploring the properties of child poverty indicators in various socioeconomic contexts", UNICEF-DPP Working Paper Series, New York.

b. Child poverty as child rights violations – Young Lives project

The Young Lives project is a UK Department for International Development (DFID)-funded international collaborative study to investigate the changing nature of child poverty. Like the Bristol study, the Young Lives project seeks to "... improve our understanding of the causes and consequences of childhood poverty."⁽³⁹⁾ However, whereas the Bristol study aimed to provide a "snapshot" measure of child poverty today, the Young Lives project aims to address the lack of information on changes in children's well-being over time. It is a long-term project that aims to follow nearly 12,000 children and their families over 15 years in four countries (Ethiopia, Peru, Vietnam and India).⁽⁴⁰⁾

The project tries to examine all aspects of children's lives, including:

- access to basic services: access to electricity, safe drinking water and toilet facilities;

39. Woldehanna, T, C Lanata and T Tuan (2004), "Stunted lives: child poverty in Ethiopia, Peru and Vietnam", *In Focus*, an on-line bulletin of the UNDP-International Poverty Centre (IPC), September, New York, accessed 21 February 2005 at <http://www.undp.org/povertycentre/newsletters/infocus4sep04eng.pdf>.

40. See reference 39.

41. MRC (2001), "Young lives and poverty", in *News Vol 32*, No 5, Medical Research Council (MRC) of South Africa, Tygerberg, accessed 21 February 2005 at <http://www.mrc.ac.za/mrcnews/oct2001/younglives.htm>.

42. See reference 39.

43. Young Lives (2004), "India: development trends and the questions they raise for the Young Lives project", accessed 24 February 2005 at <http://www.younglives.org.uk/data/focus/index.htm>; also see reference 39; see reference 2; and see reference 41.

44. On the conceptual limitations and practical problems in the use of the "US\$ 1 a day" measure as a poverty line, see Reddy, S and T Pogge (2003), "Unknown: the extent, distribution and trend of global income poverty", Mimeo, available at www.socialanalysis.org.

45. See reference 7.

46. Deaton, Angus and Christina Paxson (1997), "Poverty among children and the elderly in developing countries", Princeton University Paper, accessed 25 February 2005 at http://www.wss.princeton.edu/%7Erpds/downloads/deaton_paxson_poverty_children_paper.pdf.

47. In Taiwan and Ukraine, the study looked at the poorest quintile.

48. See reference 46.

49. UNICEF–IRC (2005), *Child Poverty in Rich Countries 2005*, UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre, Florence. This report updates and continues the work that has been carried out by UNICEF on this issue for more than a decade. See, among others, Cornia, G A and S Danziger (editors) (1997), *Child Poverty and Deprivation in Industrialized Countries*,

- access to primary healthcare and children's health: vaccination, prevalence of childhood diseases, distance to medical care;
- child care and child rearing;
- child malnutrition;
- literacy and numeracy;
- child work; and
- social capital among community.

Every three years, the project sends enumerators to visit the selected children and collect data on the deprivation indicators.⁽⁴¹⁾ The first round of data collection found that in all four countries, children experienced high levels of deprivation. In Ethiopia, for example, ". . . *infant mortality in 2001 was 116 deaths per 1,000 live births compared with a regional average of 107. Only 34 per cent of children aged 7–12 were enrolled in primary school in 2000.*"⁽⁴²⁾

The results of the Young Lives project are similar to those of the Bristol study. Poor children are suffering from a deprivation of basic needs such as clean water, quality education, electricity, proper dwellings, etc. Rural children and girls, in particular, are vulnerable to suffering due to deprivation.⁽⁴³⁾ These results, like those above, point to the need to develop targeted anti-poverty strategies that address the deprivations from which poor children suffer.

c. Child poverty and the monetary approach

The monetary approach has two methodologies for measuring poverty: absolute poverty and relative poverty. The former establishes a poverty line and counts people as poor when their income is below the poverty line. The international poverty line used by many development agencies (for example the World Bank, IMF) is US\$ 1 a day.⁽⁴⁴⁾ In 1998, the number of income poor in developing countries was estimated at 1.2 billion, with at least half of these being children.⁽⁴⁵⁾

In a 1997 study of poverty in South Africa, Deaton and Paxson used a poverty line that roughly corresponded to the international US\$ 1 a day poverty line. They studied the composition of people living below the poverty line and found that young adults made up the smallest fraction, ". . . *followed by the elderly [who receive a monthly cash payment from the government], then older and younger children.*"⁽⁴⁶⁾ They also studied poverty in Ghana, Pakistan, Taiwan, Thailand and Ukraine, following a similar methodology to that used in South Africa, i.e. an absolute poverty line equivalent to US\$ 1 a day.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Their study accounted for different family sizes and structures. It found that children made up a higher percentage of the income poor than either adults or the elderly.⁽⁴⁸⁾ It is important to note that in their study, Deaton and Paxson assumed that household resources were shared equally among all members, an approach that generally allots more resources to children than is actually the case. This assumption is hard to defend, and the Deaton and Paxson monetary study is probably undercounting the number of children living in poverty.

The United States also favours an absolute monetary approach to measuring child poverty, and defines the poverty line as the amount of money needed ". . . *to purchase a defined quantity of goods and services.*"⁽⁴⁹⁾ In the US, ". . . *the current official poverty measure, originally adopted in the*

1960s, consists of a set of thresholds for families of different sizes and composition that are compared to a family resource measure to determine a family's poverty status."⁽⁵⁰⁾

Using this absolute poverty line methodology for the US, the census bureau estimated that by the late 1990s (when the poverty rates for adults and the elderly were around 10 per cent) the percentage of children living below the poverty line was slightly less than 20 per cent for the first time since the early 1980s.⁽⁵¹⁾ In 1997, ". . . children constituted about 40 per cent of the poverty population, though only about a quarter of the total population."⁽⁵²⁾ According to these findings, children in the US make up a disproportionately large portion of people living in poverty.

Unlike the absolute poverty line approach, relative poverty measures have poverty lines that are adjusted as total income in a given country changes. Most OECD members, including those in the European Union, have leant towards relative poverty lines drawn at a given percentage of median national income.⁽⁵³⁾ For example, Bradshaw⁽⁵⁴⁾ used a relative poverty line to study child poverty in the UK. He looked at children living in households with incomes below 50 per cent of the national mean household income and found that, in Britain, the proportion of children living in poor households ". . . increased more than three-fold between 1979 and 1999–00."⁽⁵⁵⁾ Overall, he found that Britain's level of child poverty was by far the highest in the EU. Similarly, he notes that in a study of child poverty in 25, mostly rich, countries, children made up the largest percentage of people living in poverty.

UNICEF's Innocenti Research Centre's 2005 report on child poverty in rich countries also uses a relative poverty line to identify and measure child poverty in OECD countries. "*The principal measure of child poverty . . . is a poverty line drawn at 50 per cent of current median income for the country concerned.*"⁽⁵⁶⁾ The report argues that by using a relative poverty line, child poverty rates can only fall if children living in low-income families benefit disproportionately more from the benefits of economic progress than those in better-off households.

Table 1 shows the findings of the Innocenti report. It shows that in OECD countries such as the UK, Italy, the USA and Mexico, a significant percentage of children are living in poverty. Moreover, out of the 14 countries with sufficient information, only five experienced a drop in the number of children living in poverty during the 1990s. Child poverty in the other countries actually worsened.

d. Assessment

It has to be acknowledged that child rights are wide in scope and extend beyond the measurements presented in this section. This means that most measurements of children living in poverty focus on the list of constitutive rights (see Section II b), as they should. However, this is not a measure of all child rights violations.

Nevertheless, the few internationally comparable studies of child poverty indicate that the number of children living in poverty is higher than a traditional, monetary-based headcount would indicate. This is particularly the case when an approach does not distinguish the living conditions and needs of adults from those of children. Lack of information and little visibility for children affect the policies that will be proposed and implemented.

1945–1995, Clarendon Press, Oxford; also Bradbury, B, S Jenkins and J Micklewright (editors) (2001), *The Dynamics of Child Poverty in Industrialized Countries*, UNICEF, Florence. Similar analyses can be found in Vleminckx, K and T Smeeding (editors) (2001), *Child Well-Being: Child Poverty and Child Policy in Modern Nations: What Do We Know?*, The Policy Press, Bristol.

50. Iceland, J, K Short, T Garner and D Johnson (2001), "Are children worse off? Evaluating well-being using a new (and improved) measure of poverty", in *The Journal of Human Resources* Vol 36, No 2, Spring, pages 398–412.

51. Information obtained from the US census bureau website: www.census.gov.

52. See reference 50.

53. See reference 49.

54. Bradshaw, Jonathan (2002), "Child poverty and child outcomes", in *Children & Society* Vol 16, pages 131–140.

55. See reference 54. Since then, the UK government has been implementing a set of policies to end child poverty by 2020. See Minoff, E (2006), "The UK commitment: ending child poverty by 2020", Center for Law and Policy (CLASP) Working Paper, Washington DC.

56. See reference 49.

TABLE 1
Percentage of children living below 50 per cent of the median national income

Country	Percentage	Percentage change in child poverty in the 1990s
Finland	2.8	0.8
Norway	3.4	-3.2
Sweden	4.2	-0.2
Belgium	7.7	0.2
Hungary	8.8	13.5
Luxembourg	9.1	0.1
Netherlands	9.8	0.3
Germany	10.2	1.2
Austria	10.2	-
Poland	12.7	4.7
Canada	14.9	-1.3
UK	15.4	-10.8
Italy	16.6	4.1
USA	21.9	-7.3
Mexico	27.7	8.4

SOURCE: UNICEF-IRC (2005), *Child Poverty in Rich Countries 2005*, UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre, Florence.

IV. ON THE NEED AND FEASIBILITY OF MAKING CHILD POVERTY VISIBLE

For a long time, poverty reduction strategies neglected, or simply did not prioritize, the special needs of children living in poverty and the need to adopt direct policies to deal with child poverty. This is paradoxical given the fact that all over the world, in the developing and developed countries, children are over-represented among the poor. In low- and middle-income countries, the majority of children are poor, and also the majority of the poor are children.

One of the important aspects of defining child poverty is that it has a potential impact on poverty reduction strategies as well as on the development of indicators for tracking the success of poverty reduction strategies. All the definitions of child poverty reviewed above go beyond the simple one-dimensional monetary approach. The definitions above considered “. . . *material deprivation [including basic social services], as well as additional essential factors that enable a child to survive, develop and participate in society.*”⁽⁵⁷⁾ The existence of child poverty definitions encourages policy makers and organizations to directly address the special needs of children.

Any definition of child poverty has practical implications for policy advocacy and programmes. The following are a few of the possible direct applications:⁽⁵⁸⁾

57. See reference 9, Minujin (2005).

58. See reference 9, Minujin (2005).

- **influence the nature of policy dialogue on poverty reduction** – for instance, poverty reduction policies would need to be based on a broader definition of poverty and to account for children's experience of it;
- **influence policy debates on social sector spending** – for example, dialogue on social and economic policy issues would need to consider the effect of liberalization, privatization, globalization etc. on the well-being of children and families; and
- **influence the design of indicators** – the socioeconomic and demographic indicators that capture information on children would need to be informed by the alternative definition.

At present, strategies for poverty reduction seldom take children into consideration in an holistic way. For example, Heidel indicates that:

“. . . almost two-thirds of all Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers [do] not contribute to the implementation of the rights of the child simply because they practically ignore the living and working conditions of the majority of children and youth. Based on this fact alone, by no means should all donor assistance be carried out within the PRSP⁽⁵⁹⁾ process. Instead, it is the essential and urgent task of development work to qualify the PRSP process so that it contributes to a sustainable reduction of poverty and strengthens the rights of the child.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Only then can they be announced as the [full] framework of development cooperation.”⁽⁶¹⁾

According to a desk study by Marcus and Wilkinson of six full and 17 interim PRSPs, Albania's I-PRSP was the only one to declare that data on children living in poverty were inadequate. It stated that: *“The government will be undertaking a Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) on child health and nutrition, as well as compiling broader indicators necessary for assessing progress in social development.”*⁽⁶²⁾

A recent study, carried out by UNICEF in collaboration with the School of International Affairs (Columbia University) and the Graduate Programme in International Affairs (The New School) in Bolivia, Nicaragua and Tanzania presents evidence that children have not fared significantly better after the introduction of PRSPs in those countries.⁽⁶³⁾ While the reasons may vary, and are sometimes outside the bounds of the PRSPs, the fact still remains that progress in actual measurable child outcomes was almost nil.⁽⁶⁴⁾

However, the relevance and effectiveness of applying an holistic approach is widely recognized. UNICEF notes that: *“The positive synergy between actions in different social dimensions, such as shelter, health or education, is very well documented.”*⁽⁶⁵⁾ Policy makers need to recognize and leverage the link that policies in different social dimensions have. As CHIP points out:

“. . . such an holistic consideration of children's issues allows the exploitation of synergies and complementarities in the basic elements that constitute strategies to reduce poverty, such as interventions on education, health, nutrition, and water and sanitation. It is very important to explicitly integrate all dimensions that poverty presents and all their interaction effects among the policies and programmes that influence child poverty.”⁽⁶⁶⁾

59. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) were presented to the Boards of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) by countries participating in the Heavily Indebted Countries Initiative (HIPC), in order to show how the funds not spent on debt repayment were going to be used to reduce poverty.

60. Monroy Peralta, J (2004), “Children and youth in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers: a desk review”, in CD PRSPs Resource Package, New York.

61. Heidel, K (2004), “Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers: blind to the rights of the (working) child? The (I-)PRSPs' perception of child labour: a problem outline and annotated collection of source material”, Kindernothilfe and Werkstatt Ökonomie, Heidelberg, accessed 21 February 2005 at http://www.kindernothilfe.org/downloads/ka_prsp_mar_20044.pdf.

62. Marcus, Rachel and John Wilkinson (2002), “Whose poverty matters? Vulnerability, social protection and PRSPs”, CHIP Working Paper No 1, London, accessed 21 February 2005 at <http://www.childhoodpoverty.org/index.php?action=documentfeed/doctype=pdf/id=5/>.

63. Kayani, L and A Papenfuss (2005), “Do the PRSPs really help reduce poverty? A critical analysis of the Tanzanian Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)”, UNICEF Working Paper, New York; also Ayalew, Z, L Christie, C Cota, S Denny, S Ladra, K Vashakidze and D Wolfenzon (2005), “Evaluating the impact of PRSP on child poverty: the case of Bolivia”, UNICEF Working Paper, New York; and Badame, A, M Calabrese, V Capellan, B Cela and T Macio (2005), “Are Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers impacting child poverty? A Nicaragua case study”, UNICEF Working Paper, New York.

64. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the reduction of poverty in the public agenda of these countries is indeed a positive step.

65. UNICEF (2002), *The State of the World's Children 2002*, UNICEF, New York.

66. CHIP (2002), "Country overviews", Childhood Poverty Research and Policy Centre (CHIP), London, accessed 21 February 2005 at <http://www.childhoodpoverty.org/index.php?action=country>.

67. See reference 7.

68. Anguita, Eduardo and Alberto Minujin (2005), *El Futuro. El mundo que enfrentaremos los Argentinos*, EDHASA Ed, Buenos Aires.

69. ICC (2000), "Investing in children in Latin America and the Caribbean", Discussion Paper at the Technical Workshop of the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, 9–13 October 2000, Kingston, Jamaica.

70. See reference 37.

In addition, as noted by Vandermoortele:

“... the provision of basic social services of good quality to all children is one of the most direct and least expensive ways of reducing poverty. Providing basic social services of good quality to all children is key to building their basic capabilities to live in dignity. Ensuring universal access to an integrated package of basic social services is one of the most efficient and cost effective contributions to poverty reduction.”⁽⁶⁷⁾

An integrated comprehensive approach is what is needed.⁽⁶⁸⁾ According to ICC:

“Integration of services is essential because of the interdependence of the many facets of poverty . . . Lack of safe water and sanitation increase the incidence of disease episodes, exacerbate malnutrition, which in turn can compromise brain development and the capacity of learning . . . [Thus] sectoral approaches run the risk of failing to capitalize on these kinds of connections.”⁽⁶⁹⁾

V. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has reviewed the available literature that addresses some of the issues related to the definition and measurement of child poverty. It presents different concepts regarding child poverty, different definitions of children living in poverty and different efforts to measure child poverty. Although several organizations have recently adopted a human rights-based approach to defining children living in poverty, the paper notes a general lack of consideration of children's issues in the poverty literature. The lack of visibility has negative implications for anti-poverty strategies, as they seldom consider children and their rights in their design and implementation.

Child poverty is not only a violation of children's rights, it also leads to adult poverty. In order to realize children's rights and to tackle poverty, poverty reduction strategies cannot ignore the special needs of children. Over one billion children have been found to suffer from severe deprivation.⁽⁷⁰⁾ These findings indicate that children are growing up in a context where their rights are violated and without the resources or services to develop into healthy and productive adults who will be able to realize their full potential in life.

Given the impact that child poverty definitions could have on policy design and implementation we strongly argue that:

- The issue of children living in poverty must be developed independently and cannot be derived from an income poverty definition and measure. Child poverty must be recognized as a unique phenomenon that requires direct intervention. Indirect solutions have failed to address the special needs of children.
- The poverty debate should become comprehensive, including family, women and children in an holistic conceptual and practical approach. The prevalent “economic” or “market” bias disregards specific but relevant needs of children that are not addressed by the market. Discrimination, lack of family and social care, lack of access to quality basic services require interventions that go far beyond

income or economic growth issues. Only the consideration of all these aspects could provide the path for promoting inclusive societies. Children are not only over-represented among the poor but they could provide the opportunity for breaking the poverty circle. The possibility of the realization of their capabilities is also the possibility of building an inclusive society.

- The definition and measurement approach for child poverty must be multi-dimensional. Focusing on one dimension of child poverty at the expense of another will result in sub-optimal results. The experiences presented in this paper show that it is possible to measure child poverty in a direct and multi-dimensional way using the available information.
- The participation and “voice of children” should be integrated as part of any child poverty approach and poverty reduction strategy (which is different from including them in the definition of poverty).
- It is necessary to promote and strengthen the link between human rights and poverty, which will make policies and programmes more sustainable and efficient. However, this paper also highlights the importance, when dealing with the many dimensions of poverty, of not conflating child poverty with all the problems and rights violations children suffer. To do so would render the meaning of poverty as a distinct category completely empty.

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