

## **DSA Annual Conference panel, London, November 2014**

### **Understanding child and youth poverty: beyond 'business as usual'**

**Convenor: Keetie Roelen (IDS)**

Paper abstracts

#### **Laura Rodriguez Takeuchi (ODI): Intrahousehold inequalities in child rights and wellbeing. A barrier to progress?**

Until recently, for analytical convenience most measures of wellbeing have treated households as if their members enjoyed an equal share of all household resources. However, particular individuals may be worse-off than others, and could effectively be in poverty, even when the household average indicates the contrary. This paper, focusing on child wellbeing, is an attempt to measure the extent of gender inequality that takes place within households, and to show how it contributes to the overall levels of inequality. This fills an important gap given that usually assessments of child wellbeing are made on the basis of information corresponding to their household or carers (Gordon et al. 2003). When such an approach is used, for example, if child poverty is made equivalent to overall household poverty, policy responses may address the main underlying causes of poverty but fail to account for child specific concerns and experiences, while also concealing differences between individual children within households. Systematic biases against boys or girls in several areas of their wellbeing increase the chance of life-time underachievement and poverty.

We apply a multidimensional lens to the analysis of intrahousehold inequality, analysing four key indicators of child rights and wellbeing: stunting, birth registration, school attendance and time spent on work and chores. Our point of departure is anchored in the interest in measuring child wellbeing from a multidimensional perspective (e.g. Gordon et al. 2003; UNICEF's Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparities (2007); Roche 2013; and UNICEF's Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA)), but seeks to expand this lens to the analysis of inequality.

Internationally comparable household surveys have been used to monitor progress towards MDGs, and the targets defined in the 1990 World Summit for Children. Data for 20 developing countries is drawn from the Multiple Indicators Cluster Surveys (MICS) conducted by UNICEF.

Methodologically, we use a General Entropy measure (L-Theil index) to measure the extent of inequality and decompose it into its between and within-household components. The within-group component reveals how much of the inequality could be attributed to inequalities inside households. Households with no inequality can still contribute to the between-group component if their mean outcomes differ from the mean outcome of the country as a whole. Children can be deprived in one or many of the dimensions of wellbeing. We analyse the distribution of each dimension separately opting for a dashboard approach to the measurement of inequality, but complement the analysis trying to find patterns of systematic biases for boys or girls across the four indicators.

We find that inequalities between boys and girls are pronounced within households, ranging from between nine and up to 63 percent of total inequality, depending on the indicator and the country. The direction of the bias however is not systematic. While in some cases girls are more disadvantaged, in other cases boys are more deprived in the household, and even the combination of biases across dimensions of child wellbeing shows no consistent overall direction. Accordingly, interventions to address inequalities in child wellbeing need to be targeted at individual children or subgroups of households, but the appropriate responses would vary according to the different social norms and prevailing household institutions in each country.

#### **Paul Dornan and Maria Jose Ogando Portela (University of Oxford): The First Twelve Years: Growing-Up in Low and Middle- Income Countries**

Shame is increasingly recognised as a core element to the experience of poverty and as a potential mechanism through which poverty affects life chances. The ways individuals mitigate feelings of

shame can undermine engagement within communities and services and reduce opportunities open to children. This paper tests these links -how poverty is associated to shame and how shame is correlated with children's learning and engagement in school-using panel data of the Young Lives study in Ethiopia, former Andhra Pradesh (India), Peru and Vietnam. The cohort examined was born in 1994/95 and interviewed at age 8, 12 and 15. The initial sample consisted of around 1,000 children in each country.

We use a measure of shame constructed from children's survey responses at the age of 12 years and examine what factors were associated with reporting experiences of shame. We then test how shame reported at age 12 is correlated with children's concurrent education and learning; and whether these associations persist on learning and school indicators at age 15. We find consistent evidence that poorer children, children with less educated parents and those who report feeling excluded in their communities are the most likely to report shame. Greater reported feelings of shame experienced by 12 year olds were found to be associated with lower cognitive achievement at 12 years in Ethiopia, Andhra Pradesh and Peru; and there is evidence that these links persist as children age in Andhra Pradesh, Peru and Vietnam. In Andhra Pradesh we further find evidence that feeling shame at 12 years was associated with a higher probability of children leaving school by 15 years.

This analysis adds an additional instrumental argument for promoting human dignity, suggesting that policy which reduces the shame felt by poorer children may also be effective in supporting better learning for children.

### **Sonja Marzi (University of East Anglia): The Role of Participatory Visual Methods within a Multi-Methods Approach to Explore the Link between Young Colombians' Aspirations and Spaces**

This paper examines the usage of participatory photographing and filming as complementary methods in a multi-method approach to explore the link between young Colombian's spaces (relational and physical) and aspirations. The research seeks to provide an understanding of how young Colombians aged 15-22 in Cartagena navigate towards their desired futures and develop strategies to achieve them while being supported or constrained by different spaces of their everyday lives. It is based on two groups of young people living in different areas in Cartagena, a city of contrasts, especially between 'rich' and 'poor' neighbourhoods. Theoretically I draw on Appadurai's (2004) concept of the 'capacity to aspire' and analyse the young people's capacity to aspire through a Bourdieuan perspective drawing on notions of habitus, field and capital. This will enable me to understand how the young people are shaped by their spaces but also how they are shaping these. Additionally I will adopt Vigh's concept of social navigation as spaces are not a static concept but are changing continuously (Christiansen et al., 2006, Vigh, 2010). The paper argues that conventional qualitative methods such as interviews may not be able to uncover the complex link between aspirations and spaces or understand young people's everyday lives in their own terms. However, participatory photographing and filming can increase young people's control over the research and reduce the risk of reproducing knowledge and imposing the researcher's view (Dodman, 2003, Johnsen et al., 2008, Langevang, 2007, Lombard, 2013). It demonstrates that this is the case even when the research design only enables 'pockets of participation' (Franks, 2011).

### **Keetie Roelen (Institute of Development Studies): Multidimensional child poverty from a longitudinal poverty: how to account for the fluidity of childhood?**

In line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), formulation of national Children's Acts, MDGs and the discussions about the post-2015 development framework, child poverty has moved up the policy agendas of many countries. The way in which child poverty is currently measured, however, presents us with a narrow and partial picture. Current practice is still biased towards measuring static dimensions of child poverty, primarily using monetary indicators as a proxy to capture other areas of deprivation. This paper investigates the use of non-monetary

indicators for studying child poverty from a longitudinal perspective. It focuses on two specific research questions:

(1) How can non-monetary indicators provide insight into levels of poverty for children of different ages given differential needs of children across stages of childhood? While nutritional intake and high quality health care is particularly pertinent for infants, education and the interplay between work, education and leisure come into play at an older age. This fluidity of needs and vulnerabilities across age groups poses a challenge when establishing a consistent measure of child poverty across age.

(2) How can non-monetary indicators that reflect age-specific needs and vulnerabilities provide insight into changes in poverty for children over time? As needs and vulnerabilities of individual children shift over time as they transition through childhood, a challenge arises in reflecting those shifts while simultaneously providing a consistent measure over time.

This paper reflects on these two different questions using secondary quantitative panel data and qualitative data from Ethiopia and Vietnam. This mixed methods approach ensures that methodological choices are not solely data-driven but are equally informed by adults' and children's perspectives of what constitutes child poverty. Preliminary analysis indicates that studies of child poverty need to be more cognisant of the fluidity of childhood and allow for greater flexibility in the measures and analysis of child poverty, particularly in a longitudinal setting.