



Achieving Child Wellbeing and Equality

Towards a New
Understanding of Child
Poverty and Deprivations

Regional Conference, 1-3 November 2009,
Dhaka, Bangladesh

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS
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Disclaimer: This report was prepared by Azra Jafferjee and Mayisha Manguera and reflects the proceedings of the conference. The text has not been formally edited.

1. INTRODUCTION

The report presented herewith is a proceedings documentation of a three day South Asia regional conference on “*Achieving Child Well-Being and Equality - Towards a New Understanding of Child Poverty and Deprivations*”. The conference took place at the Radisson Water Garden Hotel, in Dhaka (Bangladesh) from 01-03 November 2009.

The conference brought together over 70 policymakers, researchers, UN agency representatives, civil society representatives, donors, and UNICEF staff from seven¹ of the eight² South Asian countries participating in the Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparities. It had the overall objective of exploring key findings from the country child poverty studies and discussing policy options available to South Asian governments in tackling child poverty, deprivations and disparities in a multi-dimensional and synergistic manner.

The conference was marked by a high level of representation (see annexed list of participants) from Governments, which included the Minister for Planning and the State Minister of Child Affairs, Bangladesh, the Deputy Minister of Health and Family, The Maldives, the Vice Chair of the Planning Commission, Nepal, as well as other senior economists and policymakers from Planning Commissions and from line ministries responsible for children.

The three days of discussions reviewed a number of important findings on child poverty and deprivations, and intra-country outcome disparities across income quintiles, socially excluded groups, and geographic regions. It also discussed emerging issues not covered in the methodology – relating to climate change, recurrent natural disasters, conflict, migration, urbanisation, drug abuse and extremism, among others. Several country studies and the regional synthesis presented policy ideas and reviewed innovations from South Asia, such as the revision of the definition of poverty itself, or new initiatives on a child grant. It also aired the idea of proposing that child poverty be integrated into a review of the MDGs.

A key outcome of the meeting was a firm commitment by participating countries, including the government counterparts, to mainstream the findings and policy proposals from the studies into national development plans as well as action plans for children.

The documentation of the proceedings is structured along the programme of the conference (see annexed agenda) and summarises the presentations and discussions of the three days. While care has been taken to capture the main points of the discussions and presentations, it is not meant as a transcription of the proceedings. Readers should refer to the hyperlinked presentations for fuller details as they are only presented in summary form in this report.

¹ The team from Afghanistan was unable to attend at the last minute.

² The eight South Asian countries are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, The Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

1.1 Background and objectives of the conference³

Background

South Asia counts 613 million children, averaging 39% of the total population. Of these, 175 millions are children under five.⁴ As is well documented, the region faces high levels of poverty and deprivation, with 75% of the population living under the poverty line of \$2 per person per day.⁵ Children in South Asia are disproportionately affected: recent data on child deprivation using the Bristol University methodology of measuring severe deprivation from seven basic needs - food, education, health, information, shelter, water and sanitation – suggests that over than 300 million children live in absolute poverty.⁶

Over the past decade, child poverty rates have stagnated or even worsened, raising concerns about children's wellbeing throughout the region.⁷ Some of these deprivations are manifestations of chronic situations of neglect and under-investment. For instance, the high nutrition deprivation in the region – with 45% underweight of under-fives is the result of chronic food and nutrition insecurity structurally affecting the population. This issue has now risen to the top of the policy agenda in light of effects of the global and country level food price crisis and the global economic recession.⁸

Large gaps and disparities continue to exist between girls and boys, and between children from various socio-economic groups, castes, ethnic and language groups, and by location. Income poverty and gender discrimination compound these outcomes. For example, the recent country situation analyses on MDG 4 and 5 conducted in 8 South Asia countries reveal that the bottlenecks to improving performance in child and maternal health are institutional, and related to financial and human resources. They are also linked to demand-side factors, with exclusion, discrimination, or gender preferences playing a decisive role determining whether a child and her mother utilize the health or education or protection services that they are entitled to.⁹

Furthermore, frequent political and natural disasters exacerbate already fragile situations and increase the risks to children's well-being and protection, especially in situations where exclusion and discrimination are all-pervasive. The risk, vulnerability and proneness to poverty are also increasing as a result of the emerging global and regional threats. Among these are HIV/AIDS, migration and urbanization, climate change, food price fluctuations, and the global economic crisis. This crisis has spilled over into the real economy and is affecting economic growth, employment and incomes. This may have severe direct consequences for child poverty in the region, and create challenges in terms of sustaining real investments into basic social services - education, health, shelter, child protection, or social protection.

³ Conference Concept Note, ROSA, Kathmandu, July 2009

⁴ UNICEF ROSA, Statistical pocketbook socio-economic indicators for South Asia, 2009.

⁵ See UNICEF ROSA, A Matter of Magnitude. The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Women and Children in South Asia,, Kathmandu 2009, p. 3

⁶ Measured as severe deprivation from two or more of the seven basic needs. This data is based on the four most populous countries in South Asia

⁷ Data reported by the Bristol team at the UNICEF ROSA Regional Child Poverty Meeting, Kathmandu, 7-9 May, 2008

⁸ According to the FAO 2008 report, the number of undernourished people in South Asia has increased between 1990 and 2008, on the background of an overall stagnation in agricultural yields and per capita food production. See UNICEF ROSA, Regional study on the effects of the 3F crisis, draft, March 2009 and UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, A Matter of Magnitude, op. cit.

⁹ Country profiles presented to the UNICEF Asia Pacific Representatives Meeting, Cha-am, Thailand, 2-5 November 2008

To respond to child poverty and disparities, the South Asian¹⁰ countries are engaged in a global UNICEF Child Poverty and Disparities Project. In line with emerging global discourse, the Project is designed to contribute to shifting the analysis away from a narrow and one-dimensional understanding and measurement of poverty to a multi-dimensional one, which looks at all aspects of a child's situation holistically. It examines a child's *income poverty, deprivation as well as wellbeing*– the latter defined as the flipside of deprivation and covering health, nutrition, education, child protection and social protection dimensions.¹¹ This multi-dimensional approach will – if successful – also serve to challenge the traditional sector-based policy responses, since it calls for a comprehensive policy response addressing income as well as non-income aspects of a child's well-being.

It is a truism that child poverty is linked to the livelihoods, employment and incomes of adults in the households where they live, but this brings into focus the child's reliance on the family, and indirectly on the state, for basic social services such as health, education, or public amenities, and to escape poverty. At the same time, the proposition that a child can be poor by herself because of discrimination and exclusion is manifest from some of the study findings. Hence the emphasis on subjective poverty measures, including of a child's sense of happiness, feeling of inclusiveness or opportunities for participation.

The global economic recession further reinforces the concerns with both income and non-income poverty. For instance, the food price crisis made clear that it is not caused by a global, macro-level lack of insufficient supply, but rather by multiple processes at national and international level. It is the inequitable distribution of and access to food and nutrition resources that drives millions of people into hunger and malnutrition, and poverty, and creates vulnerabilities; this has been exacerbated by speculation on commodity markets as well as a new trend in the composition of food and non-food crops.

This and related evidence therefore prompts a re-examination of child poverty and disparities, and of the role of the state and public provision of basic social services and wider policy responses in reducing and preventing child poverty and deprivation in South Asia.

¹⁰ The South Asia UNICEF offices are participating in the Global Child Poverty and Disparities Project, and are at different stages of progress.

¹¹ UNICEF, Global study guidelines, DPP, September 2007

Text Box: Objectives of the conference

The Conference was designed to discuss persistent challenges as well as the newly emerging issues in relation to child poverty and disparities. It sought to explore the emerging findings of the country child poverty studies and encourage discussions around key issues and policy options available to Governments in South Asia for tackling child poverty and disparities in a multi-dimensional manner.

Thus, the objectives of the meeting were:

- To provide a forum for exchange among Government, UN, civil society, the academia and the media towards broadening and sharpening the debate on poverty
- To share the findings of the country child poverty and disparities studies and examine some of the findings in view of the economic crisis and recent developments in social protection policies and fiscal stimulus packages
- To share examples of good policies and ways to scaling up and replicating successful initiatives to eliminating and preventing child poverty at country level
- To build a community of practitioners and alliances for a critical group of dedicated professionals who would be able to further advance the cause of child wellbeing and equity in South Asia.

Expected outcomes

The Conference sought to contribute to deepening the child poverty debate and strengthening the visibility of child rights and development in policy-making in South Asia through contributions to:

- A common understanding of child poverty and disparities with a vision for achieving child wellbeing and equity in the eight countries in South Asia
- Better knowledge of multi-dimensional measurements of child poverty, of tailoring policy response to the specific child poverty profile, and revisiting existing policy initiatives in response to child poverty
- Better understanding of data gaps, data collection and analysis, methodological difficulties, utilization of data
- Greater awareness of the implications of the global economic recession and the food price crisis on children in South Asia, and the array of available policy responses
- Ideas on policy measures in place in South Asian countries and the region
- Recommendations for regional and country-level follow up on strengthening the agenda for child poverty reduction towards achieving the MDGs with equity in South Asia
- An exploration of channels of policy influence, such as through the SAARC Secretariat, ministerial-level conferences, global and regional meetings, the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the CRC and other opportunities for advocacy

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

2. THE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL SETTING

2.1 Why the special focus on measuring child poverty?

2.1.1 Key socio-economic developments in South Asia and implications for child poverty and deprivations - Mr. Daniel Toole, Regional Director of UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA)

The Director of the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), Mr. Daniel Toole, welcomed the participants of the conference and thanked the Spanish Government for co-funding the Conference through its contribution to Social Policy work in UNICEF globally, and more specifically in the region. In his opening presentation, Mr. Toole set the floor for the discussions by highlighting the reasons for the urgency of looking at child poverty.

What is new about poverty in South Asia?

- 3/4 of the population in South Asia countries lives in poverty; and despite economic growth almost the same number still lives within the same poverty line as a decade ago (World Bank estimates).
- In 2006, the number of people consuming the bare minimum of calories required for basic human activity was estimated to be between 300–320 million; and this number may have increased by an additional 100 million people in the wake of the food price crisis.
- Income inequality has increased rapidly and South Asian countries rank among the most unequal societies in Asia.
- Little has been known in terms of child poverty and thus it requires focus on poverty debates in policy-maker and donor circles.
- In addition to the latter, there are some innovative approaches to measuring child poverty, including the one on child deprivation that the University of Bristol has conceptualized, as well as innovative policy approaches to reducing child poverty.

Why prioritise child poverty?

- Children make up 39% of the total population in South Asia, and more than half of them live in absolute poverty according to the recent data on child deprivation using the Bristol University methodology. This means that 300 million children suffer from two or more severe deprivations.
- There is more now more emphasis in understanding and measuring poverty in a multi-dimensional manner as it is acknowledged that both income and non-income poverty affects the development of children. This is of particular importance for South Asia as it is a region that experiences high degrees of social exclusion and discrimination, as well as conflict and natural disasters, all of which exacerbate the situation of children living in poverty.
- Growing income inequality and social exclusion causes significant gaps in children's outcomes, and particularly impacts those from low-caste groups and historically marginalized occupational groups (e.g., in Pakistan and Bangladesh), ethnic, language and religious minorities and others.

- South Asia has recorded slow progress on the MDGs, which are – in their majority – about improving the situation of children.
- Given all of the above, there is a need for innovative policy thinking in South Asia, and for a focused policy dialogue on how to address child poverty in a way that is relevant to each individual country context; while also advancing the child poverty reduction agenda at the regional level.

Why now?

- The world economy has been affected by a serious economic recession, and the informal economy (which is deprived of pension funds, lay-offs, insurance, etc) has been the most affected in terms of unemployment and increased job insecurity – also pushing the formal labour into the informal market. This means that the working poor are becoming even more insecure – with risks for the well-being of children in these families.
- Close to half the region’s children (the highest worldwide) suffer from malnutrition and these level are expected to increase further. Malnutrition in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal are reaching alarming proportions.
- On the positive side, response to the situation has been commendable. Many Governments are engaged in fiscal stimulus packages, social protection measures, community and school feeding programs etc, as part of a larger poverty reduction agenda.

Mr. Toole observed that the aim of the conference was to discuss how Government, NGOs, Development Partners, UN and others can zero-in on child poverty. He urged that the discussions on child poverty should look at cutting edge approaches to identifying and addressing child poverty at the regional and local level. He encouraged participants to come up with concrete action points and consider questions such as: What is working? How to look at individual opportunities, decentralised actions and so forth? How to put into place tracking of crises? How to address the new challenges - such as climate change and the perennial ones such as civil tension, conflict - in policy action? How does it all affect child poverty? What should be the concrete long-term measures vis-à-vis recurrent crises? Finally, he suggested that the discussion should lead to where child poverty is moving, what are the advocacy and policy measures, and how to address it as a Government through implementation and actions on the ground. Mr. Toole suggested SAARC might take up some of these issues in the 2010 Summit.

2.1.2 Assessing progress on the SAARC “Decade of the Rights of the Child” - Mr. Niranjan Basnyat, Director of Information and Poverty alleviation (SAARC Secretariat)

Summary of the presentation

Mr. Niranjan Basnyat, Director of Information and Poverty Alleviation of the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu, highlighted the following issues:

- Discussions on the issue of child well-being were initiated by the leaders of South Asia before SAARC was established.
- During the consultations towards the establishment of SAARC in 1981, the promotion and well-being of children was one of the five original areas of regional cooperation.
- The 6th and 7th SAARC Summits emphasised the effective implementation of national action plans on children and encouraged the sharing of best practices in the region.

- Following a series of additional Ministerial meetings, SAARC passed the Rawalpindi Resolution on Children (a policy directive for effective regional cooperation on children's issues) and declared 2001 – 2010 as the "SAARC Decade of the Rights of the Child".
- Milestones achieved to date are:
 - Ratification and implementation of SAARC Conventions to Combat and Prevent Trafficking of Women and Children for Prostitution
 - Regional Arrangement for Promotion of Child Welfare and to combat and suppress all offences against a person's dignity and the life of the child.
 - The Heads of State or Government of all member states of SAARC signed, in early 2004, the SAARC Social Charter - a major policy guideline for the region that also outlines the responsibility of the member states in relation to the well-being and protection of children.
 - A regional task force responsible to monitor progress on the implementation of the Convention to Prevent Trafficking and Promotion of Children was finalised in last May the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) – an instrument to monitor the implementation of the said Convention. In addition, a toll-free help line has been set up across the borders in the region to help children and women in related vulnerable situations. In addition, a SAARC multidisciplinary Technical Committee on Women, Youth and Children has been established.
 - The budget for the SAARC Development Fund (SDF) Social Window was approved by the SAARC Finance Ministers Meeting in September 2007 with a focus, among others, on a regional project on Maternal Health and Child Care.
 - The SAARC representative further reminded the participants at the conference of the commitment of member countries to the latter project, adding that its implementation would lead to improvements in Infant and Neo-natal Mortality cases as the situation is at its worse at present.
 - Initiatives have been put in place to monitor child related conventions.
- During the 4th SAARC Meeting of Ministers responsible for children, which was held in Colombo in July 2009, the ministers issued a statement called the 'Colombo Statement on Children of South Asia'. In this they assessed the situation of children of South Asia, and inter alia gave guidelines aimed at improving the situation of issues relating to children, including issues such as malnutrition and child care.
 - The meeting to discuss the Preliminary Assessment of the Decade of the Rights of the Child, held in last July, concluded the following:
 - South Asia needs to accelerate its efforts if it is to achieve the MDGs by 2015; especially considering the possible set-backs due to climate change, natural disasters, conflict, economic crisis, etc.
 - South Asia needs to urgently address issues of malnutrition, water and sanitation, equal access to free health care and primary education services, enhance early childhood care and development as well as ensure effective child protection interventions.
 - It is highly important that national level institutions in the respective countries monitor the provisions of CRC and SAARC Conventions.
 - The final assessment of the Decade of the Rights of the Child is being carried out in collaboration with UNICEF ROSA and the final report will be subsequently launched.
 - Action Plan on Poverty Alleviation and Child Poverty:
 - 2006 – 2015 marks the SAARC Decade on Poverty Alleviation, and member-states have reflected issues of poverty alleviation in their national policies, with child poverty deserving special focus.
 - A mid-term review on the progress of the Decade on Poverty Alleviation is ongoing.

- Some of the identified challenges that the region still faces includes malnutrition, poor quality of primary education, and maternal health, lack of social protection for disadvantage families and children, violence against children (under situations of conflict, disasters, etc).
- Mr. Basnyat reaffirmed the commitment of SAARC to respond effective and efficiently to problems related to children.

2.1.3 Child Poverty - An emerging awareness and concern in the region and in Bangladesh (Opening speech) - Honourable Mr. A. K. Khandaker, Minister of Planning of the Government of Bangladesh

Honourable Mr. A. K. Khandaker, Minister of Planning of the Government of Bangladesh, welcomed the participants of the Conference and to Bangladesh. Special welcome was extended to the Honourable Deputy Minister of the Maldives, the Vice-Chair of Planning Commissions of Nepal, and the Secretaries and all distinguished Government representatives.

In his speech the Minister of Planning in Bangladesh highlighted the following:

- Poverty remains a big concern in the region - with 1 billion people living under \$1.25/day per person per day; Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan have the highest numbers of people in vulnerable situations.
- A good portion of the population does not have access to basic social services.
- Half of the population of children (300 million) is deprived of health, shelter, water and sanitation.
- There are large gaps (inequalities) between girls and boys, between ethnic and caste groups, and within countries and between provinces.
- Although the current Government of Bangladesh has engaged in a good number of initiatives to tackle issues related to poverty, especially those of children, a lot remains to be done.
- Issues of social protection for children will be seriously discussed in the Bangladesh Government Plan of 2010 – 2020 and in its 5-year plan of 2010-15.

The Minister of Planning of the Government of Bangladesh closed his speech with a call to make South Asia a better place for children.

2.1.4 Concepts and measures of child poverty - Theory and practice in developing and industrialised countries – *Professor David Gordon, Director of the Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research, University of Bristol, UK*

Summary of the presentation

In his presentation Professor Gordon outlined the gravity of child poverty by illustrating the numbers of children dying under the age of five due to lack of preventable treatment costing in many instances less than US\$0.5. In numbers children dying in poor countries far exceed those dying from old age in rich countries.

The presentation touched on the debate on defining poverty, starting with the Copenhagen World Summit on Social Development in 1995, and the link between poverty and human rights violations. The work of organisations such as UNICEF has helped bring a concept of child poverty into the policy making process which provides a basis for the measurement of child poverty and severe deprivations.

Measuring child poverty: The Bristol University methodology uses the ‘continuum of rights’ approach which attempts to align the judicial rights approach with the social rights approach. In measuring absolute poverty amongst children, it is necessary to define the threshold measures of severe deprivation of basic human need for the following outcomes: food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, information, and access to services. The indicators used by the Bristol methodology are much stricter than that of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Results of the child poverty and deprivation study: The results were described by Professor Gordon as shocking. Over one billion children – half the children in the world- suffer from severe deprivation of basic human need and 30% (650 million) suffer from absolute poverty (two or more severe deprivations).

Large numbers of children are particularly badly deprived in the areas of shelter, sanitation and information. In many parts of the world, children have never had contact with health services. There are global variations. For instance in Africa shelter and water deprivation is stark, while in South Asia shelter and sanitation are the big issues. Hence, a one-size fits all policy process is unlikely to work and there is a need for evidence based policy-making.

The study found a higher prevalence of severe deprivations of children in physical capital items than in human capital. Professor Gordon’s assessment was that this is due to the considerably more effort in recent decades aimed at bettering human capital (education, health) outcomes. Comparatively lesser efforts have gone into improving physical capital outcomes such as water and sanitation, squalid living and dwelling conditions. One of the problems, as Professor Gordon saw it, is that much effort has gone into treating symptoms as against causes of illness such as inadequate shelter and water. The problem may be partly political – for instance, politicians like to open schools but not toilets!

Prevalence of child poverty in South Asia: Progress on achieving the MDGs in South Asia remains slow, especially on halving absolute poverty. In absolute numbers, the number of children living in absolute poverty fell to less than 300 million from a high of 350 million, but has risen to over 300 million in recent years. Deprivation outcomes differ. There has been steady progress in sanitation and health but good initial progress in shelter, information and water deprivations have slowed down and in some cases

increased. According to Professor Gordon, there was a lot of attention and effort when the MDGs were first agreed, but this momentum appears to have tapered off and consequently the achievement on the outcomes.

The incidence of malnutrition is significant in South Asia and, as Professor Gordon put it, the success of tackling global malnourishment rests on progress made in South Asia given the large proportion of under and malnourished children in the region. Earlier debates about misleading child reference population for heights and weights have now been resolved and since the problem of underweight children even in the better performing countries in South Asia remains, it cannot be dismissed as a statistical artefact.

What are the policy implications?

- 1) Large numbers of children in South Asia live in squalid conditions due to high rates of shelter, sanitation & water deprivation - particularly in rural areas.
- 2) Severe malnutrition rates are very high in South Asia
- 3) Information deprivation is often missing from the policy agenda, yet it will become increasingly important in the 21st Century.
- 4) Social protection programmes need to be expanded, particularly health and education programmes. Many children in South Asia have no contact with medical services and many never go to school.
- 5) Child/family benefit programmes need to be introduced and expanded across South Asia. They are relatively inexpensive and have been shown to be very effective at reducing child poverty.
- 6) The pattern of severe deprivation varies within and between countries in South Asia. Therefore different policy packages are needed in different areas to target the problems which are having the greatest harmful effects on children's lives.

Closing his presentation, Professor Gordon advocated for a wider use of child benefit programmes, especially universal child benefit, since with an investment of around 1-2% of GDP the returns can be very substantial. Good experiences have been made in countries such as India and Nepal following the introduction of such schemes. He urged UNICEF to advocate for universal child benefit and emphasised that a one size fits all policy will not tackle child poverty.

See http://www.lulu.com/items/volume_63/2299000/2299240/4/print/2299240.pdf

Discussion

Q. Universal child benefit is easier to administer but can lead to waste. How can this be reconciled?

A. There has been a lot of work on universal benefit schemes. ILO has done a lot of research and has shown that benefits can be effective to reduce poverty of children. Investing 1-2% of GDP will have significant impact on reducing future poverty.

Q. When tackling poverty one needs to take into account indicators that are not in conflict with Government social programmes so that poor people can continue to get benefits of Government programmes while coming out of poverty. In other words, how does one target without excluding? How can one prevent parents from not sending their children to school because they don't want to lose out of welfare programmes?

A. The advantage of a universal scheme is that it is very cheap to implement. Since it is not means tested, it is easy to deliver. The disadvantage is that well off people also get it but some of this comes

back through taxation. There are many reasons to defend a universal system. Among them are that it is politically sustainable as it cannot be undone easily. Targeted schemes are also difficult to administer. There are ways to overcome the problems of targeting. One needs to have integrated policies and one of the advantages of measuring multidimensional indicators are that it looks at policy in a bundle. Programmes need to be looked at together and across sectors. There is the need for a multidimensional way of targeting child poverty policies by looking at the whole child.

Q. Is it not better to measure absolute poverty using individual country definitions of poverty?

A. The definition of poverty that Bristol used was one that had agreement by all Governments across the world. They hold the values of all countries.

Q. Why has malnutrition remained such a persistent problem?

A. The question was responded to by Mr. Dan Toole, Director, ROSA: Nutrition is an outcome not an intervention. People are used to it; they say, "*We have always been short*". People get used to seeing stunted children. Nutrition is a product of food, health and care. Feeding a child is not easy. Women need to know *how* to feed children but time is an obstacle when mothers are working or sick. There has been a lot of progress on tackling diseases etc, but the combination needs work. Interventions need to be age specific. Most interventions focus on 3-5 year olds rather than 6months-3years which are the crucial ages. Most malnutrition starts after weaning up to 3 years. If the focus is not on the required age results will not be seen. Child malnutrition is related to maternal deprivations. It is inter-generational. Small women give birth to small children. We need to prevent under aged marriage. Girls are not ready to become mothers. There is no point giving good food and clean water if it is consumed with dirty hands. That is the nature of malnutrition.

Q. How can the impact of mother's nutrition on child malnutrition be measured?

A. If the mother is malnourished it can have long term health consequences on the child. This can be measured these using longitudinal surveys, but it is not easy. For the purpose of the Bristol study it was not attempted as the aim was to keep it simple.

Q. The presentation referred to a tapering off of progress in some indicators after a good start. Is it really due to the spotlight shifting or other factors?

A. It is mainly because of the lack of focus on these problems. If you are not looking to tackle the problem then you do not get results. Most of the slowdown in progress is not because policies are ineffective but because of a shifting or dimming of the focus. If there is constant and vigilant advocacy then things can improve. There needs to be an overarching way to look at the whole of the child. Only then does one get progress. Multidimensional measures can help but one also needs to work across the sectors. Joint budgeting is one way of converging policies. If policymakers and implementers work together - at both national and local levels – it can help.

Q. There is a lot of discussion around PRSPs, MDGs etc but we still have increasing poverty.

A. The MDGs are good but they are not comprehensive and there is no MDG on child poverty. Maybe after 2015 it can be included in a new campaign. There is generally no focus on children per se in policy.

2.1.5 Social exclusion in South Asia - Implications for child poverty and disparities – Ms. Annie Namala, Director, Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion, Delhi, India.

Summary of the presentation

In her presentation, Ms. Namala emphasised the need to look at the processes of social exclusion from political, economic and social viewpoints. The acceptance of exclusion as tradition or a way of life is increasingly being viewed as what it is – a violation of human rights. Social exclusion is particularly important in the context of South Asia because of the large magnitude of people who are affected by it in the region. There are many aspects of life that are accepted but not articulated as social exclusion till the said communities have raised it as such. From experience it is clear that social exclusion needs to be consciously addressed and does not go away through growth. While caste based discrimination is recognised in India, mechanisms for implementation has not been adequate. Ms. Namala congratulated Nepal for having made a breakthrough in bringing the issue of caste actively on to the national and even the global stage and said that India can learn from this example.

She went on to define the many vectors of exclusion and described their processes which are complex and overlapping. She explained that social exclusion provides a framework for looking at deprivation in its entirety and is reflected in power relations, social and economic indicators. Both discrimination and violence needs to be tracked to address exclusion. While in many instances, nominal participation and consultation mechanisms are put in place, in effect there is no environment and agenda for participation. It tends to be nominal rather than substantive participation.

How to understand processes of exclusion: Explaining further, Ms. Namala said that caste tends to be viewed through social lens but it is also part of economic structures. Caste issues impact livelihood and economic opportunities, social and economic mobility. All countries in the region have services and programmes but large sections of the populace cannot access it owing both to deliberate and de-facto exclusion. Biases against specific groups in society are also reflected among the people that are responsible for the delivery of social services. She pointed out that education has been made available to all children, but the quality of education provided to Dalits or Adivasis is poor in comparison to schools in which children of dominant castes study. There is built in discriminatory access – for instance seating arrangements in schools, behavioural issues.

She went on to say that in contrast to the common myth of children do not understand the complex issues of social exclusion, research has shown that children around the age of ten years can very well articulate these experiences. They report anger but society teaches them to subdue these feelings. When children from marginalised communities dropout or fall behind in school achievements, there should be more attention paid to exploring issues of exclusion and discriminatory behaviour at school – which could be the contributory factors.

Inclusion measures: Touching on inclusion measures to be put into place to combat exclusion, Ms. Namala observed that while India has incorporated a number of policies and strategies for addressing the deprivations of Dalits and Adivasis, many of these policies fall severely short in implementation. She pointed to the policy of proportionate budget allocation that has been initiated in the country, but which has not been implemented as mandated. She advocated for ‘public education for mindset change’ as being critical, arguing that while measures for marginalised communities are called upon, there is no corresponding demand for changes from dominant communities. This must also change and there

also needs to be greater engagement of persons from marginalized communities in development agencies.

Ms. Namala concluded her presentation by outlining an example of a Social Equity Audit Tool that can be used to measure inclusion. In the audit, the following questions are to be asked from the organisation:

- ◆ social inclusion policy available,
- ◆ diversity profile of board
- ◆ diversity of senior staff, other staff, caste/occupation based discrimination
- ◆ Partner NGOs profile –diversity
- ◆ CBOs profile –leadership, membership, beneficiaries, decision-makers,
- ◆ Society – leadership, benefits
- ◆ Ownership/access to resources – who owns, who has access, nature of benefit, conditions of access, how is it affected, what needs to be done to assert rights
- ◆ Affected People and Project Coverage, community leadership (exclusion focused looking at inter and intra exclusions)
- ◆ Budget allocation & Budget realization
- ◆ Role of excluded communities in planning, design, implementation and monitoring

Discussion

Comment: The term inclusion does not necessarily address problems of equity and quality. When one talks of inclusion it is in nominal terms. Inclusion entails necessary conditions but they are not sufficient conditions for an equitable society with power sharing.

Q. Is South Asia not suffering from “global exclusion”? Issues of exclusion are seen at the global level too, for instance in the system of global governance, the global trading and financial system. If we are to address exclusion we must address it at all levels.

A. Dignity is as important as equity. The debate must be brought to the global level as well. India in particular takes a stand on many issues at the global level.

Q. How can political issues be practically addressed in social exclusion indicators?

A. Policy implementation needs to be more closely tracked. The role played by agencies advocating and supporting marginalized groups is important in tracking implementation.

Q. How important is the role played by dominant/dynamic persons within socially excluded groups to champion causes? Tribal groups do not have such a voice.

A. There have to be ways of re-channelling back to the community from those that have benefited from measures to promote excluded groups; for instance encouraging well-off Dalits to serve their communities, having Dalit doctors serve in backward areas.

Q. How can people’s mindsets be changed? Not only those who do service delivery but also the marginalized themselves. How do we get information down to the marginalised groups? Mass media only reaches policy makers not those who are illiterate. How do we use existing channels such as civil society groups to reach the marginalised? How do we engage religious leaders? How do we engage

young people and the children themselves to change mindsets? Schools, youth clubs and the like are the channels that can bring change to the next generation.

A: Public education is crucial to bring out social messages. It is important to build an environment where we can dialogue.

Comment: We have to build a bridge between child poverty and social exclusion. The findings of the Bristol study around shelter and sanitation deprivation are deeply linked to exclusion as minority castes and ethnicities fare worst off.

2.2 The global macroeconomic setting and implications for human development

2.2.1 Macro-economic policy, poverty and human development: The global picture - Ms. Sharmila Kurukulasuriya, Policy Officer of the Policy and Economic Analysis Division of Policy and Planning in UNICEF HQ

Summary of the presentation

Ms. Kurukulasuriya focused on how global child poverty has evolved in the last years as well as how to think about effective policy changes. The presentation was threefold:

1. Update on the economic global crisis:

- Global activity is forecast to expand, but well below rates achieved before the crisis.
- In 2009 global economy will shrink by 2.9% and global trade by 10%.
- Unemployment is estimated (ILO) to increase from 190million in 2007 to 210million in 2009.
- Low Income Countries (LICs) are facing a sharp contraction in export growth, FDI inflows and remittances, aid shortfalls and increases in debt levels.
- The speed of recovery will vary significantly across regions and Asia should witness a quick recovery.
- There has been a 30% fall of international food commodity prices since 2008; however local food prices have risen more than 10% over the same period in over half of the developing countries and small island states, implying a reduction in household's food purchasing power.
- LICs are using fiscal policies to counter the effects of the crisis (i.e. short term stimulus)
- It is estimated that between 2009-2010 the LICs will need external financing increases (compared to pre-crisis) of around US\$25million/year; IMF can only meet 1/3 of these needs.
- The current financial and economic crisis is expected to have a negative impact on education in many developing countries.

2. Human impact of the crisis:

- Expected to slowdown on progress made towards the MDGs
- 180million more people living below \$1.25/day than expected before the crisis
- Cases of malnutrition, hunger and child mortality have been or are estimated to sharply increase; South Asia is where the highest percentage of people in hunger is predominant.
- Coping mechanisms by the affected families include reducing quality and quantity of food consumed, pulling older children /girls out of school, use of child labour etc.

- Public safety net programmes are crucial to support affected families; however these coping mechanisms are expected to thin over the coming months.

3. *Policy Response: Recovery with a human face*

- Focus on protection and investment through:
 - o Monitoring the situation of children to adjust and augment policy response
 - o Scaling up nutrition interventions as early intervention improves school performance, and better livelihoods
 - o Ensure that investment in children continue as they are the future of the country
 - o Promote child-sensitive social protection and interventions to prevent potentially intergenerational effects of the economic crisis
- UNICEF's response to the global economic crisis:
 - o 45 countries have been identified where children are at severe risk and over US\$50million allocated for immediate response, with a focus on nutritional security.
 - o In mid 2009 US\$16.2million allocated to 19 countries for scaling up nutrition interventions.
 - o UNICEF's response in key focus areas are: work on child-sensitive social protection, child nutrition security, monitoring the situation of children, child-friendly social budgeting, situation analysis and country level studies on Child Poverty and Disparities, and enhancing knowledge management on impacts and country responses.
 - o To strengthen the evidence base for decision making, a number of key indicators and initiatives were presented (slide 20 of the presentation).
 - o In relation to scaling up nutrition interventions, nutrition security with explicit focus on the "window of opportunity" – from conception to 2 years – is emphasised, and interventions should focus on maternal nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding, and infant and young child feeding; together with life-saving interventions, i.e. treatment of children with acute malnutrition.
 - o On expanding fiscal space/social budgeting, especially in times of crisis, budgets must give priority to maintaining core social spending (on teachers, nurses, social workers, programs in education, health etc); to identifying ways to enhance fiscal space and provide technical assistance to budget office and line Ministries.
- *Way forward:* Look at short and long-term responses that ensure sustainability should there be a next crisis.

2.2.2 Food, Fuel and Financial crises – Implications for the achievement of the MDGs in South Asia - Dr. T. Palanivel, Senior Economist, UNDP Regional Centre (Colombo)

Summary of the presentation

Dr. Palanivel focused his presentation on macro poverty issues and policies and addressed four areas:

1. Underlying factors of the 3Fs - learnt lessons and preventive measure for such crisis in the future

- The food and fuel crisis is volatile; looking at the trends in 2007 to 2009 the improvement in prices is temporary.

- The causes of the 3Fs are:
 - o Food crisis - the diversion of food grains to bio fuels production
 - o Fuel crisis – imbalances of supply and demand, although 60% was based on speculation
 - o Financial crisis - bad loans & weak supervision of financial instruments

2. *Vulnerability analysis - based on grouping of countries per their vulnerability*

- None of the South Asian countries belong to the *highly vulnerable* group when it comes to assessing their vulnerability in relation to International Food crisis; although Bangladesh is *potentially vulnerable*.
- When assessing the vulnerability of countries in relation to international fuel prices, South Asian countries fall between *vulnerable modest* (Bhutan and India) and *highly vulnerable* (Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka)
- There are several ways of assessing the vulnerability of a country/region. One is on the basis of their trade exposure to western markets and the other on the availability of policy space (depending on the situation of fiscal and current account positions). With regards to the first method, countries like Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan are highly vulnerable to loss of exports markets and jobs. On the latter method, countries like Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have large current account and fiscal deficits; meaning that they are likely to face severe problems in their macro economic front, unless they have access to large external financing.

3. *Impacts – Micro and Macro level*

Micro Impact:

- The higher the percentage of net sellers of food grains, the higher the likelihood that poor farmers in these countries benefit from the rising of food prices. In relation to the latter, it is likely that the poverty situation in Bangladesh will worsen as only 14% of the poor population are net sellers of food grains.
- There has been a percentage decrease in purchasing power due to the increase in cereal prices during 2006-08 by a quintile; which might not only push poor people into more hardship, but also push back millions of people under the poverty line

Macro Impact:

- The financial crisis has had a social and economic impact throughout the world unlike the previous crisis.
- It came on top of the food and fuel crisis hence the recovery could be prolonged given the volatility of the commodity prices.
- Exports have been highly affected and Asia cannot react as it did before.
- The banking system in Asia has not suffered significantly although financial markets have, due to the weakened national currencies against the US dollar and increased cost of international credit. There have however been recent improvements in net capital inflows, values of equities and currencies, and foreign exchange reserves.
- As a result of the export collapse in Asia, labour-intensive exports such as garments & textiles, footwear, toys, gems & jewellery have been affected badly. There are currently, though, some improvements in trade inflows.
- In general terms, poor countries will be affected through reductions in export volumes, commodity prices, remittances, tourism, foreign direct investment, and possibly of foreign aid. These shocks will hurt public revenues, constricting fiscal space for public programs.
- Women workers are particularly badly affected as sectors such as textiles & garments, footwear, trade & retail, electronics, tourism, have concentrations of female labour.

- In addition to job loss is the lack of job creation when 45 million – mostly young women and men – will enter the labour market in the coming years.
 - o Youth unemployment is already high in some countries (25 % in Sri Lanka in 2007) and the numbers are expected to rise.
 - o GDP growth hit hard in Southeast Asia but only slowed down in South Asia; yet it is still too early to comprehend the full social implications of the crisis.

How is the 3Fs crisis affecting the MDGs?

- Based on lessons learnt during previous crises and projecting the MDGs on different growth scenarios, it is likely that with the increase of unemployment, the number of poor and undernourished will increase, thereby reducing the likelihood of achieving the MDGs.
- Efforts to reduce inequalities, improve access to education, child health and nutrition are likely to be negatively hit in LICs.

4. Policy response – current and future

- The recovery in some countries in the region has been associated with quick and proactive countercyclical monetary and fiscal policies, but these are short-term responses.
- Asia should rethink its export-led model and consider rebalancing domestic demand as in the case of larger economies.
- Governments should consider fiscal stimulus to boost domestic consumption and expanding health, education and pension systems, invest in public (roads, bridges etc) and social infrastructures (schools), support rural and agricultural development.
- In addition, the crisis is a chance for Asia to reset itself towards more inclusive and greener growth – especially because green projects can be concentrated in rural areas, which in turn are in their majority affected by poverty.
 - o Examples of greener growth include shifting from carbon-based (coal and oil) growth to solar, nuclear and renewable energy
- In relation to social protection, move towards consolidated and better social assistance programmes such as cash transfer, food-for-work, employment guarantee schemes, etc.
 - o Also strengthen social insurances programmes – pension, health, unemployment, etc

Discussion

Q. How to ensure that savings are put to good use in such a volatile market?

A. Export is good for a country's economy. Countries like China grow at the expense of consumption in the USA, which pays by borrowing money on credit. Due to economic growth there are ways of looking for other selling markets, like the domestic market. If countries in South Asia had strong social protection, families would not be saving but would instead consume more.

Q. Some countries have invested more on social protection as a crisis response. What made them take these measures?

A. The crisis provides opportunities for Governments to engage in discussions on social spending. The other option is to look at social policies and effectiveness and where priorities need to shift to address these sorts of situations. In addition policy discussion needs to take place and UNICEF wants to use this situation to engage in issues of social protection.

Comment: GDP growth for South Asia in 2009 will be around 4% and is projected to reach 6% 2010. One of the reasons for the relatively rapid recovery is that South Asia is less exposed to the global recession due to less open markets in the formal sector. However if there is much less economic growth than expected, South Asia will be confronted with a huge problem in the future if social protection interventions are not in place. In addition, we only know what is happening in the formal economy, whereas 78% comprises the informal economy. Hence while the formal economy looks in better shape, not much can be said about the informal economy. Food insecurity, child poverty and overall poverty in 2009 is estimated to affect 100million people, hence South Asia could be badly affected by the structural poverty and not by the crisis itself. Bangladesh has the highest number of fiscal stimulus intervention, whilst in India it is based on long-term investment.

2.2.2 Social protection: Addressing poverty with a special focus on child poverty and disparities. Lessons from Nepal - Honourable Dr. Yuba Raj Khatiwada, Vice Chair, Nepal Planning Commission, Government of Nepal

Summary of the [presentation](#)

In his Keynote Address, Dr. Khatiwada began by emphasising why it is important to address child poverty. He pointed out that the experience of a child's early years determines life achievement, and has inter-generational consequences. When crises come, it is the children who are the first to suffer and the intensity of poverty is greater for children than for adults. He noted that while poverty has declined, inequality has increased. Had inequality not increased, poverty reduction might have been better than current levels. Social exclusion is a major impediment to poverty reduction and equality. There are huge discrepancies in the achievements of Dalits and Muslims vis-à-vis privileged communities. This underscores the need for social protection. In Nepal, caste issues are greater than gender issues in determining deprivation outcomes.

Economic crises and effects: Even with an improving economy, it will take time to improve poverty and inequality outcomes. Dr. Khatiwada pointed out that there is an urgent need to implement social protection (SP) policies to avoid further deterioration in outcomes. Crises are an opportunity that should be made use of. Social protection policies were introduced in Nepal in the aftermath of economic crisis in 1997 and acted as a vital safety net. Social protection should not be limited to safety nets – they need to move beyond to income redistribution schemes. They can be a very effective fiscal instrument.

Formal social protection schemes: Dr. Khatiwada went through a number of the formal schemes in place in Nepal and highlighted their advantages and disadvantages. Nepal is moving from employment support to employment guarantee programmes as it provides the best form of social protection. There are over 100 ethnic groups in Nepal, and some on verge of disappearing. There is an urgent need to protect them through targeted social protection schemes.

Child grant: Initially the focus had been only on old age pensions as the thinking was that the state has a responsibility to protect elderly. The focus has now shifted on children as politicians are convinced that investing in children is investing for the future. The schemes currently in place are targeted due to budgetary limitations, and aimed at Dalits, remote populations, victims of conflict etc.

Child social protection initiative: Dr. Khatiwada observed that there is no point in having child protection as constitutional right if the resources to ensure these rights are not made available. He said that some mechanisms have been introduced although there are questions about its effectiveness. These schemes come with conditionalities that are open to question. For instance benefit schemes that are available to families with two children penalises poor families who tend to have more children. A child is a child whether he is a Dalit or Brahmin. Other such conditionalities include the requirement that children are immunized or that they attend primary school. He said that there are merits and demerits to conditionality and beneficiary feedback must be invited. There is also a need for consolidation with other benefit schemes, in the delivery and payment systems.

Other initiatives: Dr. Khatiwada said that the Government of Nepal is considering the introduction of an employment guarantee system guaranteeing a minimum of 100 days of work. He noted that donors are naturally cautious towards such a proposal because of fiscal constraints. While the Government is mindful of this, he said that unless something is done on employment, social justice will remain only notional idea. He pointed to the Poverty Alleviation Fund of Nepal (PAF) which creates work and income generation as an example of such a scheme. Housing for the poor is another area that is receiving Government attention. Poor groups, especially Dalits face considerable housing relating problems. Along with food and employment protection schemes, the Government has this year decided to add housing benefits to targeted groups.

Major issues in social protection: According to Dr. Khatiwada, financial affordability and sustainability pose the biggest challenges for instituting SP schemes. While the Government is trying to limit transfers to 2% of GDP it will be difficult. It is seeking to bring in the private sector to contribute but that is also proving to be difficult. Enforcing a minimum wage policy is difficult enough, let alone coaxing businesses to introduce other measures such as medical benefits in the formal private sector. He conceded that it is very difficult to implement social protections schemes in a public-private partnership without private sector cooperation. The tax base is not increasing and there is limited scope to increase taxes. Moreover, Nepal doesn't have a progressive tax system. The extent of the informal labour market is unclear although estimates put it at 96% of the labour market.

Concluding his presentation, Dr. Khatiwada summed up with some *key messages*

- Credible social protection schemes are not vulnerable to political fluctuations and changes of Governments.
- Social Protection schemes work as a cushion against crises - either financial/ or natural disasters.
- Social Protection schemes that are targeted anywhere will always benefit children. Social protection in the form of old age allowances also benefits children and helps to cope with child poverty
 - Joint family system is a means of income transfer from old to young
 - Old age benefit often spent on the education and 'tiffin' expenses of (grand) children
- Employment guarantee or stability is the best form of social protection.
- Social Protection is an effective fiscal instrument to address rising income inequality - vertical and horizontal, and to reduce conflict and increase social cohesion.
- Conditional cash transfers are more effective in achieving human development objectives such as education, health and other social targets; unconditional for income poverty reduction.
- Need for consolidation of various stand alone SP schemes and putting in place a proper institutional set up for effective and efficient delivery of SP programs.
- Coping with an ever-increasing demand for state sponsored SP interventions and moving towards contributory /participatory systems where feasible.

- Balancing between the productive and distributive role of the state in the economy.
- Fiscal space for universal coverage of key social protection schemes and sustainability is a major challenge; donor support is essential for low income countries.

Discussion

Q. Social Protection programmes are difficult to manage for the Government. Is there a role for NGOs and civil society to provide social protection?

A. The continuity of a particular NGOs is not always assured and NGOs are not accountable to a defined constituency. Above all, providing SP is a state responsibility.

Q. What messages are there for other countries to transfer the lessons Nepal has made on SP?

A. The country needs to have well functioning local level administration. It needs elected representatives at the village level to ensure accountability and it needs community level monitoring and involvement. Nepal has these systems in place.

Q. India has in some instances over 7-800 schemes in one area. When one scheme starts the others don't stop. How does Nepal manage its consolidation? Are there mechanisms for funds transfer, through for instance the use of ICT?

A: First we need to know who is who and who gets what. In Nepal, recipients have a National Identity Card that is electronic with all the data on benefits received stored in it. On the delivery system, we are thinking of different agencies to take charge. Bank transfers would go to the villages and then cash handouts to the households.

Q. The political economy of SP is not sufficiently explored. Which groups push for it? In the late 1990s the middle classes who were affected by the economic crisis pushed for it. If those who are less privileged are affected, we don't see the same momentum. There is also a discussion needed on how to get fiscal space from tax reform. The fashion is for flat tax rates, but this can be regressive. There is a role for organisations such as UNICEF and SAARC to inform policymakers on progressive taxation. It should be made part of the discussion on child poverty and deprivation and inequality.

A. Nepal has a social security tax. It is the beginning of a contributory social security scheme. If we can increase it each year we can recover some of the expenditure. This is not the time to change to a progressive taxation system and introducing three slabs as among other things, as the administration costs are high. Government expenditure is growing and there has to be greater domestic and foreign resource mobilisation.

Q. In Sri Lanka the big challenge is to prevent the erosion of benefits that households receive due to inflation through a proper indexing system. The country is coming from universal schemes for just about everything to targeting as it can't afford everything!

A. In Nepal there isn't the same fiscal stress as it doesn't have universal schemes. Nepal can learn from Sri Lanka's experience. Also Nepal doesn't have the same issue with eroding SP benefits since inflation is comparatively low (single digit until last year).

Comment: Sometimes the need for evidence based policy seems overdone when considering the implementation of SP schemes. There is the chance to analyse evidence when monitoring the schemes. There is no need for exhaustive evidence to justify the responsibility of the state, for instance for its senior citizens.

3. THEMES AND FINDINGS FROM THE REGIONAL RESEARCH

3.1 Child Poverty and Deprivations - Global, Regional and Country Research and Policy Proposals

3.1.1 Operationalising a multidimensional approach to poverty and child-well-being: The Indian experience – *Dr. N.C. Saxena, Senior Adviser of UNICEF India & Secretary (retired) of the Planning Commission of the Government of India*

Summary of the presentation

Dr. Saxena's presentation was on a proposal that he had made to the Government of India for operationalising a multi-dimensional methodology for capturing social dimensions when measuring poverty. The proposal has been submitted to the Government of India and is currently awaiting their decision. His presentation touched on the following issues in relation to the proposed methodology:

- There are two types of development programmes in India: Universal Schemes (ICDS, mid-day meals, NREGA, etc) and those targeted to the BPL (Below the Poverty Line) such as subsidised cereals, health insurance, rural housing and pension.
- The BPL programmes are large (with a \$10billion/annum allocation) and well known throughout India.

How to build access to health, nutrition and hygiene into the concept of poverty?

- Estimating and determining the BPL threshold is the first step towards assessing poverty.
- A house-to-house census is carried out to determine BPL households.
- However the methodologies have often ignored the social aspects of poverty, such as access to health, shelter, education and caste status, which in turn resulted in gross underestimation of poverty.
- When estimating BPL the Planning Commission decides on the number of poor people in the country (based on a sample survey), whilst the Ministry of Rural Development (RD) decides on who those people are (based on census).
- In India, it was soon noted that redefining poverty both by accessing expenditure and access to social services was indispensable.
 - o After analysing previous data on the prevalence of poverty, it seemed that poverty was declining. Yet, in 2004, if expenditure on health and education were brought into the equation (in addition to food expenditure required to meet a daily intake of 2400/2100 calories), the poverty incidence would climb from 28% to at least 42% in rural areas.
- The issue of shelter was not commented on as a major concern when defining poverty.
 - o The level of deprivation amongst the urban poor (people living in slums) is quite high (50% of slum children are underweight), yet there are only 10% of ICDS centres in the urban areas.
- The malnutrition rate has not declined and the MDG1 is unlikely to be achieved. Issues such as the early marriage of girls, poor cultural practices related to feeding methods, the high incidence of malaria and diarrhoea and the bad quality of water are contributory factors to malnutrition. Dr. Saxena emphasised that Governments should not neglect the impact of the above elements when responding to malnutrition and urged a substantial increase in funding for the health sector by the Government.

- In 2002 the census (based on 13 indicators, including an indicator on the educational status of children) was conducted. However one of the many problems with the 2002 survey methodology was that it did not address issues of social exclusion. Additional problems included the following:
 - o Not possible to verify answers on several questions
 - o All questions have equal importance
 - o No weightage to marginalised groups
 - o No calculation done for staff time to do the survey
- As a way to ensure that issues of social exclusion are addressed, it has been thus proposed that the BPL list must include the following:
 - o Designated 'Primitive Tribal Groups'
 - o Women headed households
 - o Households with disabled person as bread-earner
 - o Household headed by a minor
 - o Homeless households
 - o Any member of the household is bonded labourer
- This will ensure that issues of social inclusion and exclusion are addressed. It was further suggested that all other social defining elements, like caste, should be graded on a scale of 1-10, with weights to indicate disadvantage. They include:
 - o Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe: 3 points; Designated 'Most Backward Castes' or De-notified Tribes: 2 points; Muslim/Other Backward Caste: 1 point
 - o Landless agricultural worker: 4 points; agricultural labourer: 3 points; self-employed artisans or casual workers or self-employed fisher-folk: 2 points
 - o No adult (above thirty years of age) has studied up to class 5 points in the household: 1 point
 - o Any member of the household has TB, leprosy, disability, mental illness or HIV AIDS: 1 point
 - o Household headed by an old person of age 60 and above: 1 point

In conclusion, Dr. Saxena called for greater advocacy to get social indicators included in the debate on poverty and urged UNICEF to support this process.

Discussion

Q. Real time data is lacking to monitor the impact of the 3Fs crisis on poverty. How can real time data be integrated with the 13 indicators presented in the 2002 Census?

A. When it comes to measuring poverty there are two stages: estimating the number of poor (survey on per capita expenditure) for which the methodology remains unchanged since 1973; this means that it does not include the effects of the 3Fs crisis. Second is the identification and determining of whom the poor people are, which is based on the census. These two processes cannot be mixed as one is for identification and another for estimation. The proposed methodology however includes social inclusion and takes into account aspects relating to the 3F crisis. The last census was in 2002. There are other schemes to help those affected by natural disasters and so forth, on short-term basis.

Q. Is there a database on ethnicity and caste?

A. The two categories (caste and ethnicity) are recognised and therefore data is collected on them. Latest studies indicate that ethnicity and caste determine poverty levels, but so do factors such as

geographical location which further exacerbates their situation. The Government recently decided, based on the last survey, that data analysis will also take geographical location into consideration.

Q. How much does UNICEF help to push matters forward? Do advocacy efforts of UNICEF really influence policies?

A. UNICEF contribution to Government budgets is minimal (less than what the Government of India spends per annum in one district). Thus in terms of aid it contributes microscopically, but UNICEF is highly reputable and thus it is seen as legitimate to give ideas and advocacy to influence policy dialogues and policy-making. However due to UNICEF's own hesitation it is not having the best achievable impact. UNICEF could be stronger.

3.1.2 Findings from the global child poverty and disparities study – Implications for policy at global level – Ms. Sharmila Kurukulasuriya, Policy Officer, Policy and Economic Analysis Division of Policy and Planning in UNICEF HQ

Summary of the presentation

The presentation of Ms. Sharmila Kurukulasuriya was centred on evidence-based findings and recommendations on child poverty. Following are the highlights of the presentation:

1. Concepts and Measurements

- A series of quotes from children who defined what poverty meant to them was presented. The quotes clearly illustrate that children view poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon. As one child put it: *"Poverty is to lose your parents, food and water, education and health services"*.
- When understanding poverty it is important to include children as equal citizens of society. When defining poverty the CRC and the General Assembly's definition on the matter should be included as broad guidelines.
- There are discussions relating to contextualising the threshold of poverty, yet the methodology was conceptualised as a universal one. Oxford University has however developed a new methodology that is more target-specific (diverging from one methodology for all countries and contexts).

Why Global Study on Child Poverty now?

- The financial crisis is a threat and an opportunity for women and children.
- Even before the crisis over 1 billion children were suffering from one or more forms of deprivation, and experiencing inequalities which undermined the MDGs; assessing poverty based on income measures alone ensured more social exclusion than inclusion.
- The global studies thus bring these emerging and persistent poverty related issues into discussions at the policy table.
- Since the start of the global study in September 2007, participation has grown.
 - o The process is under national ownership and the studies also help foster south-south cooperation.
 - o 6 countries have produced the final report (Mali, Congo DR, Congo Brazzaville, Senegal, Bangladesh and Niger).
 - o 29 countries are in advanced stages of the analysis.

UNICEF has been supporting workshops as these do provide a platform to continue deepening the understanding of child poverty and to exchange on different practices on measuring child poverty.

2. *Analysis*

- A standard template for the study highlighting areas of focus has been put in place and there is a checklist (based on drafts of the studies that have been submitted) that can be used for countries in the process of producing the report.
- The case of Yemen, Congo Brazzaville and Djibouti indicate that assessing poverty on the basis of income alone is inadequate to measure discrepancies/inequalities.
- Based on Bristol's deprivation indicators, Egypt has adopted its own threshold when defining deprivation.

3. *Policy implications*

Examples:

- Niger has focused on a 10-year programme of Development of Education (PDDE) to achieve MDGs on education for all, focusing on formal and non-formal education.
- Mexico has adopted a law (in 2004) that mandates the evaluation of all national social policies.
- Mali presented its Social Protection Action Plan in its first national forum (May 2009) where more than 250 key decision makers participated.

Two phases to advocate for policy change:

- a) *Focus on country analyses:* generate new evidence on child poverty and policies, ensure national ownership, advocate for the benefits of multidimensional approach to child poverty, enhance partnerships and focus on most vulnerable children.
- b) *Focus on Advocacy and achieving results for children:* stimulate dialogue and target decision-makers, raise awareness of key findings, engage in global advocacy, promote regional synthesis, etc.

3.1.3 Some findings from the South Asia regional project on child poverty and disparities – Trends, challenging areas and implications for policy – Ms. Gabriele Koehler, Regional Advisor for Social Policy & Ms. Azra Jafferjee, Consultant for UNICEF ROSA

Summary of the presentation

1. *Introduction*

- For South Asia the studies grew out of the need to put the face of children in poverty assessments and policy discussions.
- It was not anticipated that the process would be so difficult, however the findings are impressive and the fact that the process has national ownership cannot be overemphasised.
- Eight countries in South Asia are at currently different stages of research and policy engagement; these eight countries range from middle income to countries in difficult situations/conflict.
- The trend in the Human Development Index (HDI) is improving but still at a medium to low level; Afghanistan is the outlier, at one before the last on the global HDI ranking, while Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan are clustered together in the higher and middle ranges of the global HDI rankings.

- In terms of progress on the MDGs: Education, measured as enrolment has a record of good progress but other child related MDGs remain off-track.

2. *Main findings on child poverty and deprivation using the Bristol University Approach*

- The findings from the Bristol study show that South Asia has the largest proportion of child poverty, with half of the children (300 million) suffering from or more deprivations (defined as absolute poverty). India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh account for the bulk of the cases.
- Deprivation of shelter, sanitation and information appear are the most frequent deprivations. The incidence of severe deprivation in the following outcomes are highest in the following countries:
 - o Severe shelter deprivation: Bangladesh, Nepal and India.
 - o Severe sanitation deprivation: India, Nepal and Pakistan.
 - o Severe information deprivation: Bangladesh, Pakistan and Bhutan.
- In terms of food (or malnutrition) deprivation, the Bristol University approach uses 3 standard deviations from the reference population as compared with WHO which uses 2 standard deviations for measuring malnutrition. Hence, when using the WHO standards, more than half of the children in South Asia are malnourished. Due to the more rigorous measure adopted by Bristol the latter's estimates place malnutrition at around 20% of the population, as compared with around 45% according to the WHO methodology.
 - o It is thus important to emphasise that the Bristol approach to measuring food deprivation highlights the most severe form of malnutrition.
 - ➔ However, this has implications for comparative analysis as food deprivation is proportionately under-represented as compared with the other deprivations (shelter, sanitation and information).
- When assessing the combinations of deprivation suffered by children in South Asia, shelter and sanitation go hand in hand with the other deprivations.
 - o It is also important to highlight that there are few policies in place in relation to shelter and sanitation.
- In most countries children suffering from shelter and sanitation deprivation are most likely to suffer from other deprivations. This is intuitive, as persons living in bad housing conditions would also suffer from bad sanitation, are more likely to fall sick and have access to inadequate food.
- In terms of intergenerational determinants of deprivation, the findings show that there is a correlation between child poverty and the education level of the head of household; the lower the education of the head of the household, the higher the deprivation outcome of the child.

The presenters suggested that questions related to social inclusion, inter-generational factors, integration of findings on food deprivation with MDGs related to children need to be factored into the analysis and policy discussions on child poverty.

3. *Neglected and emerging issues.* Ms. Koehler then turned the focus of the presentation to a number of hitherto neglected and emerging issues that were posing substantial challenges to the analysis of child poverty and poverty in general and related policy recommendations.

- The 3 Fs crisis, which is likely to reverse the gains towards the achievement of the MDGs.
 - o A number of South Asia's Governments are stepping forward in systematising social protection as a means to deal with the impact of the 3Fs crisis.

- How to use social protection policies to tackle child poverty needs to be better explored in policy making.
 - Social exclusion undermines gains, especially on equity, across the board. It is therefore crucial to build into research methodologies ways of analysing the different forms of social exclusion and realities of each country.
 - Nepal for example is currently working on building in interventions to include the most disadvantaged groups into their social protection policies so that they can have ‘corrective’ effects.
 - Children and youth form a large number of South Asia migrants, and with rural to urban migration access to shelter and sanitation is exacerbated.
 - A large number of the youth will soon be entering the working age, however, due to lack of job opportunities/creation and social protection, countries’ economic growth could be negatively impacted and/or inequalities could exacerbate.
 - South Asia is prone to natural disasters, affected by climate change and conflict.
 - All these conditions have a direct impact on child impoverishment and it is crucial to find ways to capture these issues in research and policy recommendations.
4. *Implications for further research, Government policy and UNICEF programming.* Ms. Koehler concluded by raising some open questions relating to aspects of the research methodology, Government policy and for UNICEF programming, emanating from the child studies.

On Research:

- Need for more precise mapping of vulnerability and exclusion of children
- Need to focus on multiple deprivation in country research
- Need of child vulnerability mapping in disaster or conflict situations
- Real time economic crisis monitoring is required, including in the informal sector.

On Government Policy:

On the policy side, the needs include:

- Policy convergence across all different areas of social services strategies to address malnutrition or child protection measures.
 - ➔ A “bundling of policies” is required to address child poverty – discussion is needed on how to set about this. Can learn from examples such as in India, which brings together all different policy sectors to build synergies.
- Explicit need to focus on social inclusion - South Africa has for instances adopted measures on “Affirmative Action”.

On UNICEF Programmes:

- How to achieve MDGs with equity and with emphasis on child poverty?
- How to address the issues of child poverty vis-à-vis the MDGs and UNICEF mandates - especially because shelter and access to information fall outside of UNICEF’s work?

Discussion

Comment from the chair: Qualitative research shows that (based on Macedonia studies) when children are asked to define poverty, they define it as a multidimensional problem. This shows that policies to

deal with child poverty should also be multidimensional and take on the 'whole of the child' in their design.

Comment: A lot of data has been created by academics and administration and should be shared with interest groups as there is an interest to take child rights issues forward. It would thus be important to engage interest groups on these particular issues. Academics have been brought into the studies but civil society has not necessarily been engaged in this process; it is thus important to think how they can be integrated in this process.

Q. It is existentially very difficult to combine and give weights to the different deprivations considering that they have different impacts; for instance, food is more important than information. Combining indicators leads to complications. How can this be dealt with?

A. As soon as we discuss weights then we enter into a lot of caveats, hence it is important to look at them but not undermine their implications. What is important to emphasise here is that the outcome of the studies illustrate that child poverty should be looked at multidimensionally. Oxford University is for instance conducting their studies using the individual deprivation analysis. Nevertheless it does not exclude the fact that multidimensionality is just as important.

Q. Bristol University has perhaps developed a definition of poverty that may not necessarily be applicable to Asia – for instance shelter deprivation might be perceived differently in Asia as compared with the West. For instance in Asia the same relevance might not be given to shelter. In Asia school feeding programmes may have more relevance than upgrading shelter which has substantially higher costs.

A. (Professor Gordon). Shelter is a clear issue that impacts child well-being across the world, not just in the developed world. Shelter is costly but nonetheless it needs to be addressed as it has huge implications for child well-being. In addition, and in the case of malnutrition, the WHO defines poverty as 2 standard deprivations whilst Bristol defines it using 3 standard deviations. This does not imply that the 2 standards deprivation must be dropped. It simply means that 3 standards deprivation shows a greater severity of condition.

Q. The lack of economic opportunities leads parents into drug addiction and this directly impairs on children.

A. Mid-income countries such as the Maldives face similar problems as Pakistan, a country in conflict. Drug-abuse is an emerging issue that a lot of countries are facing – especially those with young populations. It is an issue that should be given considerable importance in the policy arena.

Q. What is being proposed at the global level on how to use these studies?

A. The focus will be on highlighting a few key issues emerging from the studies to be brought onto the policy table. These can include issues such as the lack of social protection, the importance of shelter deprivation, some of the emerging issues and so on. The long-term vision is to see some of these policy recommendations woven into national programming.

3.2 Opportunities and Challenges - Methodological Issues in Researching Child Poverty

3.2.1 Findings and challenges in researching child poverty and disparities in Bangladesh - Dr. Muhammad Golam Sarwar, Joint Chief, General Economic Division of the Planning Commission & Professor Sadkika Halim, Chief Advisor, Human Development Research Centre.

Summary of the presentation

The presentation on the findings of the child poverty study in Bangladesh touched on a number of aspects, of which the following are highlighted below:

- The study process and methodology
- Progress on MDGs: performance is poorest in the areas of malnourishment (as measured by underweight) and access to improved sanitation.
- Findings of the study:
 - Intergenerational factors influencing child deprivation outcomes are particularly important. The attainment of children living in households where the education of the parents were low fared substantially worse off than better educated counterparts.
 - Children are most severely deprived of information at over 50% of children surveyed. Shelter came in as the second most widespread deprivation.
 - Rural child poverty is substantially higher than urban child poverty.
- Policies for child wellbeing: the presentation outlined a comprehensive set of programmes and policies in place for each of the five pillars of child wellbeing (nutrition, health, education, child protection and social protection) and compared inputs with achievement outcomes.
 - In the area of health, the leading cause of death of children under 5 is diarrhoea.
 - Early marriage (before the age of 18) is a widespread phenomenon. In the rural areas 71% of women marry before the age of 18. Interestingly, this is not purely income related as even in the richest quintile the incidence of early marriage was at 50%.
- The presentation outlined a comprehensive set of policy recommendations (see presentation for details) grouped into four broad areas:
 - Related to five pillars of child wellbeing: *nutrition, health, child protection, education, & social protection*
 - Related to child deprivation
 - Related to research & advocacy
 - Related to policies, programmes, & their implementation (including monitoring).

Discussion

Q. What came out of the child study process? What was the value added?

A. There is still a long way to go to realise its full potential. We still need data on areas such as violence against women which is a significant issue and was not included in the study. The value added has come from awareness-raising. Some 17 ministries have been involved in the whole study process and this alone has created considerable value added as it has provided information and data to the ministries and facilitated inter-ministerial dialogue.

Q. The data shows that Bangladesh has improved its child poverty outcomes after the relevant programmes were implemented. Is there monitoring of these programmes to capture the improvements and reasons for the improvement?

A. All field level offices have M&E divisions but they don't always work as they should!

Q. Of the many recommendations proposed by the study, which would the Government take forward?

A. Bangladesh is in the process of designing its Sixth Five year Plan (6FYP). This provides a valuable opportunity for inputting some of the key findings from the study, especially, for instance in the area of direct child social protection. There are many social safety net programmes being implemented in Bangladesh and the intention is to further expand these, in particular to include a child poverty subset. The study team is intending to have discussions with the relevant sections in Government and see which of the recommendations could be taken up more seriously at this stage. The report is timely and will be very useful in the formulation of the 6FYP.

3.2.2 Child Poverty in Sri Lanka - An econometric analysis - Mr Ruwan Jayathileke, Senior Economist, Institute of Policy Studies & Indra Tudawe, Chief, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation section, UNICEF Sri Lanka

Summary of the presentation

The presentation on the findings from the Child Poverty study on Sri Lanka began by providing a demographic overview of Sri Lanka. In contrast to other countries in the region, Sri Lanka is experiencing developed country demographic trends, meaning that it has an aging population and a low population growth.

The main findings relating to child deprivation are as follows:

- The incidence of child poverty is 19.3%, higher than national average of 15.2%. Sectorally, the estate sector (the former plantation communities, and composed predominantly of the ethnic Tamil minority) record 37% child poverty incidence, compared with 8.9% in the urban areas. The estate population lives just above the Official Poverty Line (OPL), making them more vulnerable to external shocks.
- Shelter and food deprivations are the most frequent deprivations recorded for children.
- High alcohol consumption is positively correlated with child poverty. If the household consumes alcohol there is approximately an 8% chance of increasing child poverty.
- Urban female-headed households record a higher incidence of child poverty as compared with male-headed households.
- If the family size increases by one member, the incidence of child poverty increases by 15%.
- The level of deprivation decreases with the education of the mother.
- If the proportion of food expenditure over the total expenditure (food ratio) increases the probability of children in poverty increases by 5%. In other words, poorer families consume a larger proportion of their income on food.
- A one percent increase in the proportion of health expenditure over total expenditure means that the probability of children in poverty will decrease by 2%.
- The probability of children in poverty decreases by 1% when education expenditure over the total expenditure increases by 1%.

- When the headship changes from male to female, there is a 4% probability of children moving into poverty.
- A 1% increase in the proportion of health expenditure over total expenditure will reduce the probability of children in poverty in the estate sector by 10% and in the rural sector by 2%.
- Urban sector female-headed households were significantly poorer than urban sector male-headed households, regardless of the incidence of child poverty.
- If the urban sector household consumes alcohol, then there is a 20% chance of increasing child poverty, whereas in the estate sector this probability increases to 27%.

Discussion

Q. It seems that children from the plantation communities face a higher degree of social exclusion. Were there any other disaggregation done on ethnicities?

A. Ethnicity and language were not analysed.

Q. Were any variables relating to conflict analysed, for instance spatial or geographic variations of conflict?

A. There are no variables on conflict in the data sets that were available. The conflict has prevented surveys from taking place in these areas.

3.3 Convergence and synergies in social sector policies to address child poverty and deprivations

3.3.1 The findings of the child poverty study and informing the policy change process – Mr. Atma Ram Pandey, Joint Secretary, Social Development Division of the Nepal Planning Commission & Dr Bal Gopal Baidya, New ERA Nepal

Summary of the presentations

The team from Nepal divided their input into two presentations. The first was on the [Government's Response to Child Rights, Child Poverty and MDGs](#) by Mr. Atma Ram Pandey and had the following main points.

- In addition to a number of specific child rights related policies, most of the national plans have child rights interwoven into them. There is also a Ten Year National Action Plan on Children (2004-2014).
- The process of formulation of the Ten Year Interim Plan (TYIP) is presently ongoing and additional child rights related policies are being considered for inclusion.
 - The findings of the child poverty study can feed into the TYIP.
- The next Constitution is likely to be more child rights centred.
- On the MDGs, the child nutrition target will be difficult to achieve; progress on universal primary education has improved but it will be a great challenge to reach the target; the Under 5/Infant

Mortality Rate (U5/IMR) and the Under 5 Child Mortality rate (U5CMR) indicators are likely to be achieved.

- A number of problems and challenges remain:
 - There is insufficient disaggregation of child rights issues for further analysis and policy-making.
 - Internalization and integration of child rights issues can be challenging.
 - Monitoring & Evaluation of policies and programmes of all actors should be more regular.
- The cooperation and support of UNICEF is highly appreciated.

The second presentation entitled **Child Poverty and Disparities - Findings from Nepal** by Dr. Bal Gopal Baidya touched on the main findings from the Nepal child poverty study. Dr. Baidya said that the study has contributed to raising the visibility of child poverty in the policy arena and the conditions are ripe to feed the findings into policymaking.

The main findings from the study are:

- Poverty among households with children is higher than national incidence of poverty. This means that households (HH) with children tend to be poorer than those without.
- The rate of decline of poverty is slower among households with children than without children - this was perceived to be one of the most important findings of the report.
- The Dalit, Janjati and Muslim communities have the highest incidence of child poverty.
- Rural communities with large households and less education are the worst off.
- Sanitation, information and shelter are the most severe deprivations.
- There are a lot of investments that are not efficiently used.
- There have been a lot of improvements in the health budgets. Addressing the problem of under-nutrition needs multidimensional strategies. In Nepal policies still have a one-dimensional focus and largely within the health sector.

Discussion

Q. Social protection measures are largely directed at Dalits, although the findings show high levels of deprivation also among the Janjati and Muslim communities. What policies are in place for them?

A. The child grant scheme is a way of addressing other disadvantaged communities too. It is expected to be included in the TYIP.

3.3.2 Gross National Happiness Index and the incorporation of social sector dimensions within it - Ms. Kuenzang Lhadon, Researcher, Centre for Bhutan Studies,

Summary of the **presentation**

The presentation on Gross National Happiness (GNH) from Bhutan provided an overview of how the concept of GNH – defined by nine dimensions – is incorporated into the policy making process. It also described the survey process that takes place to monitor and gather information along the nine domains, when assessing progress in GNH.

As the speaker said, GNH is about thinking qualitatively and focus on the next generations; it is about thinking about the harmony of the environment. In her answer as to why use an alternative measure of progress of society was needed, the speaker said the concept was adopted after the economic crisis as it made people think about what really makes them happy. Resource allocation is done according to the domains that make up GNH. Each domain has equal importance and there are 72 variables under the nine domains.

One finding from the survey is that the happiness level for women is lower than for men due to long working hours on the domestic domain!

3.3.3 Access and quality of basic social services in Bhutan – Findings and implications for the Bhutanese children – Dr. Lham Dorje, Centre for Bhutan Studies, Government of Bhutan

Summary of the presentation

The speaker began her presentation by pointing out that the main aim of the Government is to strengthen the nine domains. It is the duty of Government to ensure that every child is free of poverty and suffering. Children are an asset and need to be nurtured. Bhutan has made huge investments in the social sector particularly in health and education where there is free access to services. Now there is the need for advocacy to include child poverty into the Ten Year Plan. The big challenge though is how to influence Government.

Bhutan is ranked high in the Human Development Index and is on track to achieving the MDGs. It is most probable that by 2015 Bhutan will reach the goals on reducing extreme hunger and providing universal access to primary education. However, national averages conceal considerable regional disparities within districts (see slide numbers 16 and 17). The main issue is fiscal sustainability. Whether Bhutan can maintain the progress made on the MDGs after 2015 is the big question. This will be particularly difficult if the donors withdraw now that Bhutan has reached Middle-Income Country status.

Climate change will become a huge challenge for Bhutan given its ecological makeup and vulnerability to natural disasters. This might lead to the need to divert funds allocated to the social sector to fight the effects of climate change and consequently harm progress made on social indicators.

The presentation also covered in detail the findings from the child poverty study. Some of the key issues include:

- Education, information and shelter are the main deprivations that children suffer.
- As with other countries, the incidence of child poverty increases with the size of the household and is inversely correlated to the education level of the mother.
- When the deprivation outcomes were cross referenced with children's state of happiness, the highest proportion of unhappiness came from children suffering from information and education deprivation.

A number of recommendations were also proposed, including the following:

- The indirect approach to child poverty has left many children deprived of education, information, shelter, etc; hence direct and targeted interventions are needed
- The creation of stable income generating activities in rural areas are necessary.

- At the local Government level, child issues are regarded as a private matter. Thus local level leaders must be made aware about the importance of constituting pro-child policies and programmes.
- Unless there is a specific child poverty budget, local leaders are likely to remain swamped by the many priorities for the use of public funds.
- Promotion of the rights of children must be made a focus; poor children themselves are less likely to raise their voices (hierarchical society), so NGOs and media must be supported to strongly represent children.
- Making additional investments in establishing the institutions of higher learning closer to rural children (wherever possible) will have higher long-term returns.
- Review of overall existing nutrition strategies for child and mother.
- The promotion of awareness on reproductive health, family planning, child birth, child bearing must be given enhanced priority.
- Need to gear up nation-wide awareness campaigns on child and mother nutrition and infant feeding practices (role of media, involvement of local leaders, etc).

Discussion

Q. How can one bring together the GNH approach with the deprivation approach?

A. The team would like to integrate the two. It is working with Oxford University on applying their methodology to Bhutan and integrating the two approaches. In 2010, the GNH surveys will aim to include a child poverty subset. GNH index should also include children as a stakeholder group to be interviewed.

3.4 Challenges of Addressing Child Poverty and Disparities in Middle Income Countries

3.4.1 Child poverty analysis in Maldives - Policy implications – *Honourable Mariya Ali, Deputy Minister of Health and Family & Mr. Aisath Sama, Department of National Planning of the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, Government of the Republic of Maldives*

Summary of the presentation

The Deputy Minister in her presentation highlighted that The Maldives has made a lot of progress in recent years. There have been significant strides in the provision of social services, which have been possible thanks to strong economic growth and consistent high investments in the social sector, community care and social protection. The country has recovered from the 2004 tsunami and has graduated from a Low Income to Middle Income Country (MIC) status. The strong economic growth has also led to substantial reduction in poverty and has helped to eliminate extreme poverty. Highlights of the presentation were:

Key areas of concern facing Maldives are:

- Maldives has a young population with the median age 18 years; providing employment to this young working age population is a major challenge.

- Health - stunting, wasting and nutrition deficiencies (31% underweight in 2005 compared to over 40% in 1994) are crucial problems in The Maldives. Due to traditional practices most children do not receive their first solids until their first birthday. The remote north and central Atolls face a higher risk of micro-nutrient deficiencies due to lack of variation in food caused by remoteness and seasonal extreme weather conditions.
- Education - The Maldives spends 8% of its GDP and 14% of the national budget on education. A higher proportion of girls are enrolled at the secondary level but less at the tertiary level. Attempts are underway to move education out to regions to facilitate their access.
- Housing, water and sanitation - There is a huge shortage in housing due to limited land space. Installing pipe borne water for drinking is very costly so the Government is promoting rainwater harvesting. Issues of sanitation were further exacerbated after the tsunami.
- Social protection - There are a number of schemes for elderly and disabled persons, and new grants for single mothers, school children, subsidized housing are being planned for the next five years. The problem is that there is no single policy framework for social protection and there are difficulties in consolidating and standardising data.
 - There is no routine system for M&E, which is important for new programme formulation.

Policy challenges:

- The high incidence of drug abuse is a major challenge affecting health and education outcomes.
- It has been noted that religious extremism has increased yet it is difficult to establish numbers although it is clearly a growing phenomenon. This challenges recent progress in many ways as in this group births, marriages and deaths are not registered, families refuse to vaccinate children and prevent them from attending school. This could jeopardize and threaten progress towards reaching the MDGs. Attempts by authorities to come into contact and visit these families have been largely unsuccessful. Relevant authorities are working with the Ministry of Islamic affairs to find a solution.
- The new Government has made five pledges to address poverty: provision of quality housing, affordable health care and transport to all Atolls as it is a challenge to reach faraway islands, and prevention of drug abuse. Progress has been seen in improving transport as the cost has come down enabling all Atolls to access health points more easily. Yet reaching those that are hard to reach, especially when the sea is rough, remains a challenge.
- All island and Atolls are different and have specific needs, and this must be captured in policy making.
- Almost half of the population in some islands have disabilities such as cerebral palsy and currently there is no outreach for disability services. There is an urgent need for technical assistance to train staff.
- Strengthening social protection and more particularly, child protection is an issue. There is increased gang violence in the capital and although these are small in numbers, in proportionate terms it is significant. Child abuse and women's health is a new issue; some 15% of the population have suffered at some point from sexual abuse before reaching the age of 15. Domestic violence is also an issue and it results in large proportion of the population having mental illness issues, which leads to child poverty if viewed holistically.

Emerging issues:

- Mainstreaming gender into policy - One proposal is that instead of one ministry having the mandate to look at gender, that the issue be made crosscutting, thereby obliging all ministries to include gender issues in their own programmes.
- High youth unemployment needs deeper understanding and better interpretations in labour laws.
- Increase in intravenous drug use, which may lead to the increase of HIV/AIDS prevalence.
- As is widely known, The Maldives remains highly vulnerable to climate change.

Discussion

Comment: Despite the relative homogeneity of The Maldives, there are problems of disparities. It also faces many challenges despite having reached MIC status. There is the need to keep a constant vigilance on equity by ensuring gains across the board.

Q. What are some of the best practices made by The Maldives in tackling drugs abuse and HIV/AIDS?

A. There are increased efforts to reduce supply of drugs through law enforcement. There is a rise in numbers of youth seeking rehabilitation and rehabilitation programmes in prisons are being introduced. It is important to include the Ministry of Islamic Affairs in discussions to get the messages across.

Q. What are some of your experiences in tackling the problem of child malnutrition and successes with educating mothers on feeding methods?

A. The health Ministry does run programmes but the problem is that many new forms of food have been introduced without adequate awareness of their nutritional values. Weaning and feeding practices need to be addressed more effectively.

Q. Issues of religious extremism are also affecting MICs. This needs to be factored into the emerging challenges.

A. This needs urgent attention and action. The Maldives has always been seen as a liberal country and this new trend is alarming.

Q. How can the problem of shelter and overcrowding be solved when land is simply not there?

A. There is a decentralisation policy to provide services in the provinces. The Maldives is divided into seven provinces and there will be a hub in each province to improve services. One Atoll in the south has been improved to divert migration into the capital, Male. Similar areas are planned to be built. Provision of affordable housing is one of the main goals of the new Government. Some 10,000 affordable flats will be built and made available to low income families.

Q. What is the new development strategy of The Maldives to address the new challenges?

A. All sectors are meant to coordinate their plans, including the Ministry of Islamic affairs, in the sector plans. Sector plans have been endorsed as multi-sectoral. It helps to work together to prepare multi-sector plans.

Q. Are multi-sector plans linked to joint budgets?

A. We hope to conclude the budgeting process soon.

3.4.2 Policies towards poverty reduction in Sri Lanka – *Mr. A.G.W Nanayakkara, Former Director, General of Department of Census and Statistics and member of the Sri Lanka Study Team*

Summary of the presentation

Trends in poverty reduction:

- The majority of the poor population are the rural poor (82%). Poverty in the estate sector is increasing but they comprise only 5% of the total population.
- Poverty has declined with increasing GDP per capita.
 - However, there is a lack of data from the North and East due to long years of conflict.
- While there is reason for satisfaction with the overall trend, Sri Lanka has persistent inequality, which is increasing.
 - The estate sector performs better in terms of equality compared with the urban sector.
- Narrowing the gap between rich and poor is the major challenge; the basic distribution of the share of income in the ten deciles has remained largely unchanged over past decades.
- There is a direct link between accessibility (measured by road density) and poverty, similarly to other countries in the region.

Poverty alleviation programmes:

- Sri Lanka has many social welfare programmes, which were put into place at the time of independence, and more recently poverty alleviation programmes have also been established.
 - The current one is the Samurdhi Programme which in 2007 had an outreach of 1.7million families (27% of the total). However targeting issues remain a challenge since even high income deciles benefit from the Samurdhi programme.

Provision of health and nutrition:

- Despite high achievements in the Maternal Mortality rate (MMR) and U5/IMR, nutrition remains a challenge as 21% of children are underweight.
- The health outreach service is good but reaching far flung out areas is still a challenge.

Discussion

Q. Sri Lanka performs well on national indicators but there are huge regional disparities. Are there any specific programmes to reduce these disparities?

A. There are some efforts being made by new Ministries such as those for national reconstruction and the estate sector.

Q. The U5/IMR has risen from 11%-15% recently? What is the reason for this?

A. The exact reason is unclear. It is being looked into by the Ministry of Health.

Q. How can the problem of benefits going to the non-poor be addressed? Access to safe drinking water is not so high, why is that? Regional poverty levels are very high, why is that?

A. The targeting issue is one that the Government is trying to tackle. The problem is that many families hover just above poverty line. Hence it is not feasible to remove them immediately because they can easily slip back into poverty due to external shocks. Access to safe drinking water is at 85%. It will be very difficult to ensure 100% coverage. Rural poverty is hard to address due to access issues. However, there have been vast improvements between the two recent survey periods.

Q. There is a high dropout of males in tertiary education. Is this due to them joining the labour force?

A. Girls do not leave their families at a young age so they stay at home and study, while males leave in search of jobs.

Q. Can you elaborate on policies to prevent child labour that UNICEF is adopting in Sri Lanka?

A. At the regional office UNICEF is working with ILO on policies for the region. There is some data coming out of the child poverty study that will help to move work on child labour forward. There are different policies used by the countries – some use conditional and unconditional cash transfers (Pakistan, Bangladesh), Maldives has tried to tackle child labour through legal means such as banning employment before the age of 14, Sri Lanka has compulsory education from the ages of 5-14 years (until recently it was from 5 -12 years); all these are efforts to prevent child labour.

Q. Has Sri Lanka had experience with rapid real time monitoring, for instance during the Tsunami?

A. Such a survey was used to gather data after the tsunami. A special census was carried out to get information on damage caused to provide relief assistance. This was also necessary as all kinds of agencies and people were collecting data that was highly unreliable. The survey had difficulties obtaining figures on casualties there was very good data gathered on physical damage. Due to this survey the Department of Census and Statistics was able to collect data at the smallest administrative unit which consequently enabled the calculation of poverty estimates down to the district level.

3.5 Child poverty and disparity challenges in countries in difficult situations

3.5.1 Coping with the dynamics of child poverty in Pakistan – Mr. Zafar Hameed Ismail

Summary of the [presentation](#)

Pakistan has not started on the research for the child Poverty study. Hence, Mr. Zafar Hameed Ismail, Consultant on Child Poverty and Budget Study, outlined the structure of the study that will commence shortly.

- In Pakistan the study remains in its early stage: discussions were held between UNICEF and the Government of Pakistan in 2008, leading to developing a concept note (finalised); a Steering Committee was established (initially limited to ministers, but there are ongoing discussions about changing its composition to include civil society).
- Issues of social services data cannot be disaggregated to child level, but evidence is found in written studies; however a lot is still ongoing or is to be initiated.
- Data collection to measure poverty has been limited to household income/consumption.
- The existing body of data does not allow for estimation of child poverty.
- The only study that can be directed to child poverty is Ercelawn (PILER 2008) as it used child labour to indicate the possible effect this has on poor households and more particularly on child poverty. The study is more qualitative than quantitative.
- Current public efforts aim to put at the centre of poverty education and social inclusion agendas.
- Pakistan is a signatory of CRC and subsequently to the SAARC child related conventions. Political will is slowly triggering policy dialogues on the issue of child poverty, but it is rather slow.

Way Forward:

- There must be better data collection, especially since Pakistan is a nation in conflict. It is a challenge but must be put in place.
- Social exclusion must be addressed and the causes of exclusion require further study.
- The pilot child poverty study will be conducted in four deprived districts of each province.
- The study should also include issues such as increased intoxication (drug abuse, alcohol and the prevention of HIV/AIDS incidents due to intoxication).

Discussion

Q: Pakistan faces enormous challenges as part of the group of countries in conflict (alongside Afghanistan). Some of these problems relate to child poverty and deprivation as security issues have profound effects on all aspects of deprivation and poverty.

A: Conflict is a major concern and affects mainly the poorest of poor in the urban areas. However, the conflict has so far been limited to the urban areas; should it move to the rural areas the poverty situation will worsen considerably. It is thus important to find a methodology on poverty that works effectively given the challenges faced by countries in conflict.

The speaker further added that the methodology tested by Oxford University on measuring poverty could be taken on board in the context of Pakistan. It was the speaker's opinion that a combination of Bristol and Oxford methodologies would be best suited to address issues of poverty in countries in conflict like Pakistan.

Reaction from the floor: A lot of indicators could be taken into account when it comes to assessing poverty of countries in conflict, which Bristol does not include. There has been work done, which includes positive indicators, on child well-being (conducted in Eastern European countries); however if it has added value it is something that still needs to be assessed. In fact it is important to assess if the efforts of including additional indicators is worth taking on as it implies a lot of statistical work.

4. ADVOCACY AND POLICY DIALOGUE

4.1 Examples of gathering evidence to influence policy

4.1.1 Child rights observatories around the world – potential in influencing decision making – Mr. Dennis Arends, Chief Social Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation, UNICEF Egypt

Summary of the presentation

The purpose of Child Rights Observatories is to help do research and to disseminate information. There are Think Tanks *on* children but rarely *for* children, and these observatories are trying to work on the *for* children component.

Types of observatories:

- They are not often located within Government structures, especially in Europe. In certain cases they are parastatal, and independent but are nevertheless subsidized by Government.
- Most of them exist at country level but some are multi-country, and some sub-national.

What do they do?

- Work on child rights in a broader spectrum taking the Child Rights Convention (CRC) as the broad guideline. The issues that are addressed by these Observatories include juvenile justice, education, and child protection.
- All these observatories do research and/or work on policy, including thematic research, situational analyses (e.g. in Ecuador), etc.
- Knowledge sharing is channelled via a website and by establishing knowledge portals. Anyone who wants to know about children can go to the knowledge portal, facts, figures, contacts.
- Policy advocacy: Those located within Governments feed into policymaking. The observatories also engage in organising conferences and other dialogue and exchange fora; public awareness and campaigns
- In terms of capacity building, the observatories focus on doing research with children *as* researchers
- Technical advice to Government is provided in the same manner as *think-tanks* do.
 - ➔ The main aim of the observatories is to generate evidence and dialogue to influence policymaking in the best interest of girls and boys.
- Some interesting experiences made are: Child Rights Indices, international conferences on child poverty, youth-media platforms for dialogue, and child parliaments.

Initiatives taken in Egypt

1. child poverty conference
 2. child rights indicators to come up with a Child Rights Index
 3. qualitative research
 4. real time monitoring – e.g. on crisis impact through the use of SMS
 5. user and producers forum – role of observatories to bring people and data together
- ➔ always looking for systems and continuations

Discussion

Comment: When UNICEF brought out the issue of child poverty it increased UNICEF's responsibility for children. There is the need to not only increase number of conferences but also investment in children.

Q. What is necessary to establish an observatory? Can an NGO do it?

A. An observatory is only a name. The important thing is what it does. In India it was not started from scratch. A consortium of NGOs came together and built a network, whereas in Egypt it began from scratch.

Q. What is the relationship between children's commissions and observatories?

A. Children's commissions are like an Ombudsman. They are more integrated into Ministerial and Government structures and they handle complaints.

Q. What are the institutional arrangements necessary for an Observatory?

A. It needs fulltime people. The observatory in Egypt is comprised of a team of five professionals (databases, knowledge management, researchers). It is envisaged that the observatory it will be absorbed within the Ministry within the next 2 years.

4.1.2 Tracking the Impact of the 3Fs Crisis on Education in Nepal – Methodology and Capacity Building – Ms. Myriam Blaser, Programme Officer of the Education Section, UNICEF Nepal

Summary of the presentation

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world. It is especially vulnerable to external shocks as it is highly dependent on food and fuel imports. Significant numbers of people have become food insecure due to the 3Fs crisis. Drought and food price increases are the main shocks onto households.

The objectives of the monitoring system are to:

- Monitor consequences of the crisis
- Establish a vulnerability profile
- Strengthen the evidence base and inform policy response as the best time to tackle poverty is in times of crisis
- Test a pilot that can be replicated

The design and implementation of the monitoring system comprises of:

- An alarm system
- Liaising with Government departments

Monitoring takes place at three levels:

1. Household level - quarterly surveys using existing WFP surveys with a nationwide coverage.
 - The aim of these surveys is to see how households are affected by shocks.
2. School level – monitors dropouts in 11 districts that are more likely to suffer from food insecurity.
 - Every 3 months the heads of 22 schools return questionnaires stating impacts observed.
3. Community level – Focuses on group discussions with mothers, etc.

Challenges in implementation:

- Transfer of monitoring system implementation to national institutions: capacity building is required. It is important to involve partners at the outset as transfer of the methodology can become a problem later on.
- Analytical and technical skills
- Management skills
- Timeliness and quality of data collection
- Difficulties to initiate channels for conveying school data
 - ➔ Open question: How to separate the impact of the global 3F crisis from Nepal's chronic food and economic crises? It was difficult to isolate the impact of the crisis with other factors.
 - ➔ The model is still at piloting stage so it is too early to give recommendations on its impact on policy. But this is intended to move forward.

Discussion

Q. How can UNICEF support countries to deal with the crisis?

A. UNICEF Nepal has not gone to the stage of defining policy responses, however school feeding programmes are being expanded as a response and feedback indicates that this might be one of the ways forward. More discussions with stakeholders on disseminating the system need to be undertaken.

Q. Are there chances for replication in Bangladesh?

A. If Bangladesh can jump onto an existing survey system with an agency like the WFP it can be tested.

Q. How effectively are the findings being used?

A. So far it is premature to use the findings but they will be disseminated through stakeholder meetings and advocacy as well as follow up on best use.

Q. Financial crises are transitory in nature so the remedies should not be permanent. Policy should be structural as well.

A. Yes, we need structural changes too.

Q. In India there is a lot of interest in M&E and there is a lot of resistance to NGOs evaluating flagship schemes. What has been the Nepal Government's response? Is there collaboration and interaction with the Government of Nepal?

A. The Government is definitely involved although it was not from the beginning as UNICEF Nepal wanted to first pilot the model. The system is implemented through school supervisors who feed the data, and district education officers are responsible to send the questionnaires. The Education Department is responsible to oversee the data gathering process.

Q. What is the cost of the exercise even if it uses existing data gathering channels? Even if everything went well how long would it take to get results?

A. Adding the questions to periodic household vulnerability survey was done free of cost by WFP. A consultant was working on it for 6 months. From February 2009 until now UNICEF Nepal we have spent about US\$70,000. It is unclear what each monitoring round will cost in the future. For the monitoring round of April to June we got the information in September. We hope to improve with experience and get the results across earlier.

➔ All in all it is a relatively cost effective way of piggybacking on other agencies. A lot can be learnt.

5. CHALLENGES, ADVOCACY AT REGIONAL AND COUNTRY LEVEL, ACTION POINTS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

5.1 Country team discussions and presentation of Action Points

The conference had set aside two working group sessions for country teams to sit together to discuss the findings of their studies and come up with Action Points for follow up. Following are the country presentations of their findings and proposed Action Points / Next Steps:

BANGLADESH

Steps forward:

- The study has been completed, and will be launched at the end of the month (November 2009). The State Minister for Women and Children's Affairs along with other dignitaries will be invited to the launch.
- Disseminate the Child Poverty report to high level decision makers and stakeholders.
- Advocate increasing of social protection budgets for children in the MT Budgetary framework.
- Strengthen implementation of the CRC and deepen child poverty in the 5 Year Plan by considering study recommendations.
- Strengthening of monitoring system and monitoring of implementation of Child Rights must be conducted more frequently.

Completion of study: The study is completed and will be launched at the end of 2009.¹²

BHUTAN

Challenges with the methodology:

- Bhutan uses the Gross National Happiness approach; hence the inclusion of child poverty measurements has proven very difficult. In fact, the team is not clear how to build synergy between the two approaches.
- On issues of social participation – children are not involved in decision making thus need to encourage NGOs, legitimate groups, etc to strongly represent children.
- Data limitation related specifically to children, hence the use of the census (which focuses on overall population).
- Utilization of multiple sources of data in the absence of child specific data has allowed for interconnection, yet translating it into one single framework was difficult (able to identify what the problem is but not its causes).
- Difficult to connect policies with outcomes and strategies.

¹² See web link for press release of the launch which took place on 25 November 2009 in Dhaka.
http://www.unicef.org/media/media_51925.html

Action Points / Next steps:

- A national workshop was held last year on child poverty; the report was circulated however no comments were received. The way forward is to soon organise another meeting with stakeholders including Government. This is an opportunity that cannot be missed considering that the 10 year plan will be based on poverty reduction. The meeting should focus on the following:
 - Push for the GNH commission to focus on child poverty dimensions.
 - Once the report is done, send it to stakeholders for response.
 - Relevant sectors should then prepare own strategies for submission to higher authorities.
- Important to involve MPs in the process given their interest.
- Involve the media as they are a mechanism to take child poverty issues among the public so that it is actually recognised as a problem.

Completion of study: 2nd quarter 2010

MALDIVES

Broad policy areas on programme level activity:

- DHS survey data to be incorporated into Poverty Study and finalize the study.
- National endorsement of poverty study to address child poverty in a more holistic manner allowing disparities issues to be addressed and ensuring budget allocations for social sectors.

Recommendations:

- Ministerial council supported by multi-sectoral technical committee to address child poverty.
- Strengthen prevention and treatment and rehabilitation aspects relating to drug abuse.
- Introduce forums to allow discussion on differing perspectives on gender, children and other religious aspects

Completion of study: first quarter 2010 (need consultancy support)

NEPAL**Challenging areas:**

- Build strategic policy/programme linkages and focus between ministries as well as amongst development partners.
- Focus on pockets of CP stricken areas and groups.
- Increase access of targeted groups (equity) to services.

Influence policy making by:

- Focusing on specific CP issues in National Development Plans.
- Refocus on WATSAN (water & sanitation), health, education, and nutrition to ensure equity of all these areas; blanket measures adopted so far have not been able to address the equity issue.
- Establish linkage between landless population and CP.
- Bring sector ministries, other than NPC, and development partners in policy and programme issues.

Opportunities:

- BIMSTEC meeting to be held in Kathmandu (December 2009).
- Secretariat SAARC meeting (Mid-Term Review of SAARC decade for poverty alleviation) to be held in Islamabad (March – April 2010).
- SAARC's National coordination Council on social sector to be held in Kathmandu (2009).
- Country currently in process of developing new Constitution hence it provides a good opportunity to hold discussions on CP issues.
- Include social protection issues with SC at NPC as a means to interact CP issues with line Ministries.
- Develop policies and plan of action at the national level; process includes development partners (including NGOs).
- Thematic groups (central level at NPC) to be established on crosscutting issues for the development of the National Development Plan (including MDGs friendly).

Activity points:**Short-term**

- A short key findings report to be developed for advocacy.
- Sharing best practices convincing for policy makers (GOs and DPs).
- Dissemination: organise a workshop with stakeholders including MOCK (Parliament for children) and consultations on child poverty issues (led by GOs and supported by UNICEF).
- Immediate action plans to address the issues emerged from the CP study.

Mid-Term

- Revisit indicators and assess areas of deprivation through indicators relevant to Nepal.
- Develop a CP focused action plan.
- Refocus on education – combine retention and completion together with enrolment in primary education.
- WATSAN - expand the programmes to the areas identified by CP study.
- Health and Nutrition – special focus on nutrition in survival and development interventions.
- Shelter – prioritize roof-landless and ultra-poor groups
- Re-strengthen the data management system so that CP studies run smoothly.

Completion of study: 1st quarter 2010**PAKISTAN****1st step (estimated duration of one month)**

- Study needs to kick start
- Hold national workshops to define poverty, including child poverty

2nd Step

- TORs for the pilot study being prepared; research to begin in 6 months and conducted over a year.
- Together with UNICEF and Bristol University assess ways of having the 2 methodologies (Oxford and Bristol) successfully integrated.

Completion of study: Time frame to be determined

SRI LANKA

Methodology:

- Main constraint was the inability to merge the data sets on HIES and DHS which limited the analysis across selected child equity indicators, and to link income quintiles to wealth quintiles.
- Mapping of MDGs already in place.

Action

- Examine possibility of extending the deprivation analysis with the DHS data set.
- Further mapping of district level inequities with study findings.
- Mapping of national welfare programme/policy by year of intervention.
 - ➔ Where possible, initiate data generation from north and east of the country

Policy relevant issues emerging from study

- General access and coverage of services in relation to shelter, education, health, water, sanitation, social welfare and child protection is satisfactory.
- However, inter- district disparities exist across all service sectors. Children that require attention are those in lagging areas, conflict affected areas; and special groups such as the disabled, institutionalised children, street children, child labour, and former child soldiers.
- Feed findings of the study to the National Plan of action 2010-2014.

Action to improve equity

- Education – programmes to improve :
 - Quality of education,
 - Decrease school drop out with age,
 - Secondary completion rate,
 - Teacher deployment.
- Health and Nutrition - programmes to improve :
 - Nutrition status through HH/community oriented intervention.
 - Maternal mortality and child mortality in districts with high incidence.

Completion of study: 1st quarter 2010

Summary table: Timeframe for completion of studies

Countries	Completed	2010		Longer period	Unknown
		1 st quarter	2 nd quarter		
Bangladesh	√				
Sri Lanka		√			
Nepal		√			
Maldives		√			
Bhutan			√		
Pakistan				√	
India					√

5.2 Conclusions and Outlook

The final session was made up of closing statements from a panel of speakers. The session was chaired by **Ms. Gabriele Köhler** (Regional Advisor Social Policy, UNICEF ROSA) who kicked off the discussion with a few closing remarks:

Ms. Koehler pointed out that it is important to recognise the magnitude of the issue as 300 million children in South Asia are suffering from two or more deprivations, and this number constitutes half of the population in the region. Major initiatives are taking shape in South Asia such as the work underway in India to redefine poverty. The move towards a multidimensional approach must also take into account aspects such as age group, areas of affected people, and how to access them, into consideration in order to ensure equitable results. She said that while social exclusion is often focused on gender and caste, it is often the case that regardless of institutional history or economic status every country has particular forms of social exclusion that needs individual analysis and attention.

She further pointed out that it is necessary to take into consideration the emerging issues when evaluating child poverty. These include: the economic crisis, issues of climate change, emergencies and conflict. (Afghanistan is for instance not present in this workshop given its difficult conflict situation).

Issues such as drug abuse have been highlighted as a major emerging concern. For instance in The Maldives, and it too seems to be a growing concern in the other South Asian countries; this issue reflects the extent of extreme forms of poverty. Similarly the issue of emerging religious extremism needs to find consideration in child poverty research.

Ms. Koehler commended the findings of the country studies, which she described as being overwhelmingly rich, detailed and solid. Hence the analysis of these findings needs now to penetrate into policy discussions and decisions as well as bring the findings to publication.

There are several common threads that are evident. They include, increasing inequality in different areas of deprivation (not just income); including how geographic location determines access to services. The other common threads are the malnutrition 'puzzle', which South Asia still faces as a continuing challenge; the role of shelter as the driver of other deprivations needs refocusing and therefore it is crucial to reflect on the implications and next steps in addressing these issues.

Ms. Koehler went on to say that is important to brainstorm on how to capture the informal sector, as it houses 80% of population. And equally important is to reflect on how to build the bridge from the analysis to policy work; several countries are for instance working on the convergence of policies through cross-sector engagement.

She pointed out that social protection is an additional area to be addressed in policy-making as it does not substitute services in areas such as social services, health, education, ECD, child protection services, water and sanitation and needs to be additional.

Tracking policy implementation, tracking crises in real time, advocating in influencing national plans and programmes are all necessary steps towards making a difference in child poverty.

The fact that this conference was well attended, and considering the high profile of its participants, is a sign that South Asian countries are on the right track and that they are ready to interact with their respective Government's on policy discussions.

She said that what needs to now take place is the building of a bridge from research to policy. A number of pertinent policy discussions and ideas took place that can be further explored. They include:

- The idea of “bundling of policies”, in other words convergence efforts in some countries around National Action Plans for children and other forms of convergent policies,
- Apply joint budgeting in cross-sector programmes and policies; we are still groping with how best to do it.
- Social protection in all countries as the predominant response to child poverty – ideas around child sensitive social protection is emerging, as we saw in Nepal's child benefit schemes. We still need to discuss more about the actual policies.

In conclusion, Ms. Koehler urged the country teams to make connections to constitutions and national plans and budgets, child voice in defining child poverty.

Panel inputs

- ❖ **Ms. Annie Namala** (Director, Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion in Delhi) made the following closing remarks:

Ms. Namala echoed the congratulations made by Ms. Kohler to the presenters on the findings of the country studies; they provided great insight and brainstorming which helped pull together Child Poverty to the table. On the subject of social exclusion, she explained that tracking can be done in two dimensions: outcome level (school drop-out, etc) but also internal exclusion (psychological, emotional, etc) and, in her opinion, both these tracking methods are equally important.

She said that there is a need for constant vigilance on where the inequalities are growing or are stagnant and it is important to move advocacy forward. Civil society interest groups can push the discussion and process on child poverty forward. To do so UNICEF should engage with civil society in a consistent manner and support them in raising the issue so that it reaches the communities. There is also a need for positive role models among children of excluded communities, as it can have a positive impact on the affected children's self-esteem.

On the issue of institutionalization of children and whether it is positive or negative is yet to be resolved. However it is important to discuss how to reach a balance and this is an issue that needs to be addressed at community level. For example in some cases, institutions such as boarding schools are necessary for remote or disadvantaged populations to ensure their children have access to education.

Lastly, Ms. Namala pointed to the need to create mechanisms so that important development players can directly report to the CERD (Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) in the interest of communities (just as governments report on CEDAW and CRC progress). UNICEF is requested to consider paving the way of this process.

- ❖ The closing remarks of **Professor David Gordon** (Director of the Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research, University of Bristol, UK) were as follows:

Professor Gordon revisited the opening part of his first day's presentation by drawing the attention of the audience to the fact that fate of the world's children depends on South Asia as the bulk of the world's poor children live there. Governments of South Asia therefore have a heavy responsibility. The Bristol study has been a start and this can be built on, for example by supplementing the indicators if needed. The important thing, as he pointed out, was to have the evidence to support policy making. There are sophisticated ways of measuring poverty but what every country lacks is data on child poverty so this study and the conference will serve to raise the profile of children and put them firmly on the agenda. The question, as he said, is what to do next - policymakers in particular will want to know what to do next. There needs to be an evaluation and prioritization of which programmes are working and which are cost effective. He closed by saying that there has been a lot of progress so far, but there is still a long way to go.

- ❖ **Dr. N.C. Saxena** (Senior Adviser UNICEF India & Secretary (ret), Planning Commission, Government of India) concluded:

Dr. Saxena reiterated views of Annie Namala that there needs to be a great deal of advocacy on social exclusion. He said that a third to a half of the world problems are in South Asia and of this most of it comes from India. Whether it is the U5/IMR or MMR or gender, India is still amongst the far behind developed economies and in some ways even behind Bangladesh. He pointed out that as illustrated in the Bangladesh presentation, girls fare better in higher education in Bangladesh than their counterparts in India. Dr. Saxena said that as a nation India requires a great deal of advocacy. India is a free country, where its citizens can write and say a lot and there is a lot of freedom of the media. He for instance, can take existing data and state his case without fear. This is not possible in many other countries. Having said that, he acknowledged that one needs to understand why there is not much advocacy on children's issues. Civil society and UN organisations really need to push advocacy on child rights and child poverty. Indians, he said are good at criticizing foreign domination and globalisation. When it comes to their own affairs, however, such as children, they are not sufficiently vocal.

Dr. Saxena pointed out that in India there is a lot of data and evidence on outcome indicators but in between there is a gap. No one knows where the money goes and what happens to it. There is a need to convert anecdotal knowledge into hard evidence. He observed that UNICEF India is very good at small initiatives at the micro level – for example when it comes to opening schools! Yet on the macro level there appears to be a fear or a reluctance to take on issues at the big stage. He pointed to a report by the NGO *Pratham* which found that 50% of children in classes cannot read the alphabet. It was a shocking report in the face of what the Government spends on primary education (US\$50 million) and has been widely received. If there is good evidence based on good research, the Government will support it and take the necessary action. He acknowledged that India has been generally averse to accepting advice from the UN, for instance India does not have PRSP process yet India does accept the MDG targets as national targets. He said that what India wants not money but ideas and advice and this they will be open to.

India does a lot of research and produces a lot of data. What India needs are ideas and proposals on how to convert all this research and data into results on the ground. Dr. Saxena said that he was asked

by the Government of India to write a report on poverty and this report showed that social exclusion is a big factor in the cause of poverty. Hence, that is what he means when he says that India, and even South Asia, requires a great deal of evidence-based advocacy if it is to go forward.

- ❖ **Mr. Philippe Duamelle** (UNICEF Representative in Sri Lanka) concluded by highlighting the following issues:

Mr. Duamelle said that he observed that platforms such as this conference have contributed to putting South Asia into the centre of the world's screen. It brings out the importance of understanding that global success start with South Asia, and this needs to be re-enforced in as many regional and country forums as it is possible. Measuring child poverty is a powerful tool if combined with budget and public expenditure as this combination grants the best elements to work with and also to better understand children's situation; it is from these elements that vision can thus be built. Resolving the problem of child poverty starts with the efficient implementation of programmes, and the latter starts with convergence. Pro-poor interventions are for instance not necessarily well coordinated and hence it is important to think how to use the power of data to bring problems together as data is a powerful magnet. Mr. Duamelle said that bringing all stakeholders together makes for a winning team, as it brings together vision, political will and resources and these are the elements that are the key to success. On the latter, he emphasised that vision, analysis and political will is far more powerful than financial resources. He concluded by reminding the audience that this conference was just the start of a long process and the next step is to mainstream the issues raised and discuss. To this end, personal engagement is the most important factor in ensuring a successful outcome.

- ❖ In his closing remarks, **Mr. Fakrul Ahsan** (Division Chief of General Economics Division, Planning Commission (Government of Bangladesh) stated that:

South Asia houses more than 1/4 of the world population, with women and children forming the majority and is also the most vulnerable group. He said that social safety nets is one of the main instruments to reduce child poverty and as such needs additional consideration. SAARC is committed to eliminating child poverty and therefore strengthening cooperation through SAARC must be promoted in order to strengthen knowledge sharing between countries across the region. Mr. Ahsan said that while Bangladesh has done well in the area of poverty eradication, the situation remains to be further improved. For instance, Bangladesh aspires to reach economic growth in excess of 5%, to reach MIC status by 2020, and to reduce poverty from the current rate of 40% to 15% of the population. This means that a lot of work still needs to be done. In addition, resource constraints are overwhelming, and although MDG targets are on track, much more effort is needed.

- ❖ **Mr. Niranjan Basnyat** (Director of Information and Poverty Alleviation, SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu) concluded with the following remarks:

There have been many meetings within SAARC on the social sector. After the SAARC was established in 1995 there were a number of Ministerial meetings on social issues. The Rawalpindi meeting in 1996 declared the SAARC Decade on the Rights of the Children. The SAARC is now conducting a final assessment on the progress made by member states on the rights of children. Mr. Basnyat said that responses have been received from most of the member states and he was very encouraged by the

steps taken. There are many mechanisms in place, especially in the legal arena, to protect the rights of children. The SAARC Secretariat is hoping that the report on the SAARC decade will provide more evidence to implement more measures for protecting children. He announced that a SAARC Development Fund (DF) has been established and the secretariat for the fund will be opened in April 2010 in Thimpu. Under the DF the SAARC will have project-based programmes in the member states as well as regional and sub-regional projects encompassing the eight member states. India has provided the SAARC with a US\$100 million grant for projects on social issues such as the empowerment of women, maternal health and child care and immunisation. It is hoped that the member states will support the projects for improving the Under 5 and Infant Mortality Rate and the Maternal Mortality Rate. A Task Force has been constituted and will be put into place on child trafficking and child welfare. He said that there needs to be a unified operating procedure. If all the countries work under similar procedures we can prevent trafficking. The SAARC is hoping to set up a toll free helpline for the region. Mr. Basnyat said that during the 14th SAARC Summit in Delhi, the leaders of SAARC acknowledged that SAARC has made many declarations and action plans, but implementation is lagging. So SAARC will now aim to go from a 'Declaratory' phase to an 'Implementory' phase. The 2006-2015 SAARC decade is on on Poverty Alleviation, hence there is room for synergy with child poverty. Ultimately progress depends on the respective Governments as they are the main implementing force but there is always the need for international organisations and other stakeholders to get involved.

Comment from the chair: The SAARC decade on poverty alleviation is an excellent opportunity to put children into the poverty decade.

- ❖ **Ms. Sharmila Kurukulasuriya** (Policy Officer, Policy and Economic Analysis, Policy and Planning, UNICEF New York) concluded by saying:

The last few days have been quite inspiring as the discussions have been closing in on the difficult issues. Ms. Kurukulasuriya described the level of commitment and ownership in the South Asian region as impressive, saying there is a lot of innovative work in the findings (by way of the methodology and indices) and in policies. She said that there are a lot of interesting issues which can be fed into the global report on child poverty. The engine of this process is the country reports. The global report is just the tool to bring the issue back to national level. She observed that the discussions have gone beyond the rhetoric and are now in the reality of country situations – the participating teams are now facing the core of issues. When it comes to looking at the evidence and pockets of poverty and gaps in progress, she said that there is a lot in the country studies that can be built on. In terms of going forward, she said that when the country teams meet next year issues such as social protection, the use of new multidimensional measure, or perhaps on setting up a new unit within ministries on child poverty or converging social sector spending could be discussed in more depth. She announced that UNICEF will be forming a child poverty e-network to which all the participants of this conference will be invited to join and encouraged the audience to use it so that the process of dialogue and exchange can be continued.