



CHILD POVERTY INSIGHTS

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Making the Case for Measuring Child Poverty

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How do children experience poverty differently to adults?

The widely accepted monetary approach to identifying and measuring poverty is being challenged by other multidisciplinary approaches such as the child deprivation approach. Conventional poverty reduction strategies that concentrate only on generating economic growth to reduce poverty do not recognize that not only are these responses inadequate to address the multiple deprivations vulnerable households face, but also that children experience poverty differently from adults and that children have specific and different needs.

UNICEF acknowledges that children are vulnerable to certain types of deprivation; even short periods of deprivation can impact their long term development. "Children living in poverty experience deprivation of the material, spiritual, and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal members of society." (UNICEF, 2005). Child poverty is the poverty experienced during childhood by children and young people. It differs from adult poverty in that it has different causes and effects, and the impact of poverty during childhood has permanent effects on children (CHIP, 2004; UNDP, 2004).

The monetary measurement is an important measurement, but it does not capture how poverty affects children in physical, emotional and social ways. Additionally the monetary approach does not capture the multidimensional and interrelated nature of poverty as experienced by children, for example that malnutrition can affect health and education which in turn may impact a child's long term development.

Can child poverty be measured as such?

There is no uniform approach for defining, identifying or measuring child poverty. The Bristol deprivation model was a groundbreaking effort aimed at measuring child poverty, which not only aims to measure the extent of child poverty but also the depth of poverty. The deprivation measures of child poverty are based on internationally agreed definitions based on child rights, namely adequate nutrition, safe drinking water, decent sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information.

UNICEF's [Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparities](#) adopts both the Bristol model along with the monetary approach to measure child poverty. The Study also encourages countries to undertake qualitative studies to contextualise specific issues faced by countries.

The [Young Lives](#) project is another study that aims at highlighting the face of child poverty. This long term study seeks to improve our understanding of the causes and consequences of childhood poverty, tracking the lives of 12,000 children growing up in four developing countries over 15 years. The basis of this study is a questionnaire-based survey alongside in-depth

research using participatory methods.

The monetary approach is also a useful model for measuring child poverty, but as indicated it is not adequate on its' own. The most common methodology in the monetary approach for measuring absolute poverty is through the creation of a national poverty line; most frequently \$1 a day is used at the international level. According to a study by Deaton and Paxson (1997), using the absolute poverty model of \$1 a day, they found that children made up a higher percentage of the income-poor than both adults and the elderly.

How can child poverty be inserted in the policy discourse?

Child poverty is increasingly receiving the recognition that national priorities need to reflect stronger linkages between policies and children's needs. The major objective of measuring child poverty as distinct from other poverty measurements is to highlight the plight of children so that disadvantaged children are considered a priority, especially in the creation and implementation of poverty reduction strategies.

This multidimensional approach to child poverty has practical implications for policy advocacy and programs, such as:

- Influencing the nature of policy dialogue on poverty reduction. For instance, poverty reduction policies would need to incorporate a broader definition of poverty, in order to address how children experience poverty.
- Influencing policy debates on social sector spending: For example in discussions on social and economic policy issues, would need to consider the returns to investing in children.
- Influencing the design of indicators: the socio-economic and demographic indicators that capture information on children need to be enhanced.

National development plans including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) outline the policy areas that a government considers of highest importance. Commonly such documents emphasize growth alone as the solution to alleviating poverty. It is therefore essential to re-direct the PRSP discussion so that it contributes to a sustainable reduction in poverty and it strengthens the rights of the child. In this regard it is essential to utilize sound techniques for measuring child poverty which in turn keeps poor children on the agenda.

The Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparities will provide relevant evidence and policy analysis on the situation of children living in poverty. This unique and valuable information should be used as powerful advocacy tools for placing children as a priority on the policy agenda at national, regional and global levels.

Some general sources:

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