



PRESS RELEASE

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New study shows over one billion children severely deprived in the developing world

A new study published today for UNICEF by the Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research at the University of Bristol and the London School of Economics has produced the first scientific measurements of child poverty in the developing world. Launched by Mary Robinson at the London School of Economics and by senior figures at the House of Commons, it shows that over one billion children (more than half of those living in developing countries), suffer from severe deprivation and 674 million (over a third) are living in conditions of absolute poverty. (see Table 1 below)

Dave Gordon, Professor of Social Justice at the University of Bristol and one of the authors of the report, *Child poverty in the developing world*, says:

“Many of the children surveyed who were living in absolute poverty will have died or had their health profoundly damaged by the time the report is published, as a direct consequence of their appalling living conditions. Many others will have had their development so severely impaired that they may be unable to escape from a lifetime of grinding poverty.”

Based on a sample of nearly 1.2 million children from 46 developing countries - the largest and most accurate sample of children ever assembled - the researchers found:

- Over six hundred million (34%) children are living in dwellings with more than five people per room or which have a mud floor;
- Over half a billion children (31%) have no kind of toilet facility;
- Nearly 376 million (20%) of children use unsafe water sources or have more than a 15-minute walk to water;
- 134 million children aged between 7 and 18 (13%) have never been to school;
- 91 million children under 5 (15%) are severely malnourished;
- 265 million children (15%) have never received any immunisations or have chronic, untreated diarrhoea;
- Nearly 450 million aged between 3 and 18 (25%) have no access to a radio, television, telephone, or newspapers at home.

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The study found significant differences between regions, with Sub-Saharan Africa having the highest rates of severe deprivation with respect to four of the seven indicators - shelter, water, education and health. There were also clear gender differences, particularly with regards to education deprivation, with girls 60% more likely to be severely educationally deprived. Girls in the Middle East and North Africa region are three times more likely than boys to be educationally deprived. Children in rural areas are much more likely to be severely deprived than urban children, particularly with regards to water, sanitation and education. In a number of countries, absolute poverty rates among children in rural areas are as high as 90%.

The report concludes that anti-poverty strategies need to respond to local conditions, and that blanket solutions to eradicating child poverty will be unsuccessful. Considerably more emphasis needs to be placed on improving basic infrastructure and social services for families with children, particularly with regards to shelter and sanitation in rural areas. An international investment fund for payment towards national schemes of child benefit in cash or kind is suggested as a means to provide the impetus for rapid fulfilment of children's fundamental rights to social security and an adequate standard of living.

Shailen Nandy at the University of Bristol and one of the co-authors of the report says:

“At this rate the UN Millennium Development Goals are unlikely to be met, given declining international commitment to development aid. The results of cutting public spending on basic social services have been an increase in poverty and inequality, a fact which organisations like the World Bank need to acknowledge.”

The findings of the report will be discussed at a conference at the London School of Economics today - for full details of this and the launch events see below.

ENDS

Journalists are welcome to attend the following events:

Child poverty in the developing world is to be launched by Mary Robinson at the London School of Economics, Old Theatre on **Tuesday 21st October 2003 at 1.15pm.**

The report will also be discussed at the House of Commons by the new Commissioner for Children, Margaret Hodge, Jean Corston, MP, Chair of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, Lord Puttnam, UNICEF UK President, and a Senior Advocate of Human Rights who will speak on “Human Rights and Child Poverty” at St. Stephens Entrance, Committee Room 12, on **Tuesday 21st October 2003 from 5.30-7pm.** Further details of this event can be obtained from Elaine Allenby-Parker (E.Allenby-Parker@bristol.ac.uk; 0117 954 6765).

There will be a conference discussing children’s rights and child poverty at the LSE on **Wednesday 22nd October 2003** where the authors of the report will be speaking. Please visit <http://www.lse.ac.uk/cgi-bin/display> for more information. The conference will commence at 9.30am, in the Hong Kong Theatre, LSE, Houghton Street.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. For further information about the report, please contact the authors:

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2. For further information and a review copy, please contact:

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3. Aim and background of study

The study was commissioned by UNICEF to provide a scientific measurement of the extent and nature of child poverty in the developing world. The report ***Child poverty in the developing world*** is a summary of a much larger research project on child poverty and child rights. It contributes to UNICEF's work on reducing child poverty around the world.

4. Methods

The analysis for the report was based on Demographic and Health Survey and, for China, the China Health and Nutrition Survey data, on nearly 1.2 million children in 46 countries collected mainly during the late 1990s. It is a particularly good sample of African children (with interview data on one child in every 650) although the number of children in the East Asian and Pacific sample (123,400) represents a lower sampling fraction (one child in every 4,500). The information about the children's lives was reported by their mothers or main carers.

5. Definitions

The report uses the definition of absolute poverty agreed by the international community at the 1995 World Summit on Social Development. Absolute poverty was defined as:

“...a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services”.

The study defines absolute poverty among children as suffering from two or more severe deprivations of basic human need and severe deprivation as experiencing deprivation of at least one basic human need.

Table 1: Percent of Children Living in Absolute Poverty and Severe Deprivation, by Region

Region	Percent Absolute Poverty (2+ severe deprivations)	Percent Severely Deprived (1+ severe deprivations)	Percent Severely Shelter Deprived	Percent Severely Sanitation Deprived	Percent Severely Information Deprived	Percent Severely Water Deprived	Percent Severely Food Deprived (U5 pop)	Percent Severely Health Deprived	Percent Severely Education Deprived
Sub Saharan Africa	65	83	62	38	39	53	19	27	30
South Asia	59	82	45	61	40	18	27	23	19
Middle East & North Africa	40	65	45	26	23	24	12	14	23
Latin America & Caribbean	17	35	23	17	10	7	5	7	3
East Asia & Pacific	7	23	8	5	7	10	5	3	1
Developing World	37	56	34	31	24	21	15	15	13

Note: Percentages for Food Deprivation are for the population aged under 5; for Education Deprivation it is for the population aged 7 to 18; and for Information Deprivation it is for the population aged 3 to 18.