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Future research and action

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There are widely accepted development policy agendas which are vital for the chronically poor – e.g. growth, human development and, most recently, social protection. Protecting and expanding the reach and quality of basic services to benefit chronically poor people remains fundamental, and it is heartening to see that many countries protected basic services during the recent global financial crisis – being in a better position to do so as a result of sound macroeconomic and fiscal policies and having learnt the lessons of past crises about the importance of doing this.

Social protection has been identified as a useful entry point with high potential to address the more difficult policy agendas of making growth work for chronically poor people and advancing a process of progressive social change. These are exciting new policy focuses, which it is imperative to develop more fully during the next five years, so the post-2015 global approach to development has a real chance of eliminating poverty on the basis of plenty of evidence about what works at national and even sub-national level. These new policies will aim at transforming chronically poor people's lives by addressing the economic, social and political structures that keep people poor. Policy-engaged research can help identify what such transformative policies might look like in context.

This paper has identified a few of these. Exploiting the synergies among asset accumulation, market functioning and protection is one. This is a new contribution the CPRC has made to debates about how to reduce poverty; how to achieve these synergies should now be the focus of much innovative policy work. Likewise, the need to link education and skills development systems more strongly with labour market functioning should generate innovative policies and programmes. Developing the 'good society' through progressive social change is a more context-specific venture. Achieving greater gender equality in terms of access to and control over resources is clearly a central part of the agenda. Land and housing ownership, inheritance rules and marriage laws are also critical determinants of wellbeing outcomes. But the content and process of reforms in such areas represent new areas for action and research.

Policies to reduce chronic poverty need visionary political leadership and need time to 'embed.'

The formulation of policies that address chronic poverty is socially and politically controversial, and may challenge popular perceptions of poverty. As such, policies to reduce chronic poverty need visionary political leadership and may also need time to 'embed.' This involves long-term political commitments and institutional frameworks which permit evaluation to feed back into policy. Chronic poverty is unlikely to be addressed without legitimate, well-grounded states, especially in a world of volatile markets and climate change. But addressing chronic poverty can also provide new bases for legitimising states through better state–citizen social contracts. While it is not easy to promote the kind of 'developmental state' this implies, it is possible to say that the 'good governance' agenda is too restrictive and does not address the key state capacities required to support the kinds of growth and social change which address chronic poverty. This includes the development of constructive but also regulatory relationships between state and private sector.¹⁸²

Chronic poverty is no doubt highly challenging but it is nevertheless possible to address it effectively through evidence-based policy. It has been tackled in different ways and with different results in CPRC partner countries and internationally. Local research partners have been able to use Chronic Poverty Reports and other devices (conferences, workshops, short publications) to engage successfully with policymakers. Engagement has taken different shapes in different countries and at different times. In general, researchers have chosen to act as 'insiders,' networking with policymakers and building relationships selectively where doors have been open. Confrontational approaches (e.g. via media, social movements) have been less frequent, and less successful, although where they complement an 'insider' approach they can make a powerful contribution to getting an issue on the agenda. Participating in technocratic networks has been influential in terms of getting policymakers to address chronic poverty.

Examples where an impact has been made include the Uganda social protection story (Box 13 above), the raising of the Bangladesh primary education stipend for girls, the development of a cash transfer programme in the new state of Southern Sudan, and the multi-stranded focus on chronic poverty in India's 11th Five Year Plan. Given the recent completion of much research including that in country, engagement with policy makers needs to continue, and impact re-assessed in five years time. This would be

182 CPRC (2008). 'Chapter 6: Ending violent conflict and building a social compact'; and Pages 62-3. In *The Chronic Poverty Report 2008-09: Escaping Poverty Traps*. Manchester, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC).

183 'the BMZ draft strategy on poverty reduction reflects much of CPRC's key messages'. Personal communication from Sascha Reeb, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

even truer of impact at the international level, where ideas take a long time to percolate through to policy change. A critical test will be the evolving discussion of the post 2015 development framework. In the meantime, the German government's draft new poverty strategy has reflected some of CPRC's findings.¹⁸³

Once these difficult issues are on the agenda, research can also help answer the 'how' questions. In the case of social protection, research has begun to document the effects of different policy instruments in different contexts. However, the impact of research is inevitably limited – to get challenging policies implemented effectively requires, in most settings, not only political commitment and an evidence base, but also structures and processes to hold policymakers to account. This may be difficult for policymakers to instigate, since it is their actions that will come under the spotlight. For example, new rights to information, employment, forest land and education in India will only be as good as their implementation. As in many other situations, this means an overhaul of governance is required – with the creation of accessible accountability and redress mechanisms and active social and political movements which can take up causes on behalf of chronically poor people. Building the necessary coalitions across state and civil society and the private sector is no mean task.

What further contribution can research make? Research priorities would include using the emerging panel databases to understand the impact of the recent food, fuel and financial crises on poverty dynamics. Urban poverty dynamics and chronic poverty are poorly understood and analysed, partly because of a lack of good data. The extent to which sub-national anti-poverty policy making is essential, the strategies which work, and how best to build relevant political and administrative capacity at that level are important issues for further work. This could include a proper evaluation of Territorial Development approaches. Research is needed on what the policy levers are to join up key policies and programming, as recommended in Section 4 – for example labour markets and education; assets accumulation, protection and markets – and, more generally, to get labour markets to work better for the poor. And finally, developing the research capacity in country (or at least in regions) to understand the difficult context-specific issues we have bundled together under the heading of progressive social change is urgent.

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