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CRIN NEWSLETTER

Child Rights Information Network Number 13 / November 2000

Children and macroeconomics

Photo: Maggie Murray-Lee / UNICEF

The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) is a membership-driven organisation and network of over 1,000 child rights organisations around the world. It strives to improve the lives of children through the exchange of information about child rights and the promotion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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A website
Updated daily, the website, which is a leading resource on child rights issues, contains references to hundreds of publications, recent news and coming events, as well as details of organisations working worldwide for children. The site also includes reports submitted by NGOs to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

An email list service
Distributed more than twice a week, CRINMAIL provides regular news bulletin about child rights issues, as well as information about new publications and coming events.

A newsletter
Published three times per year, the newsletter is a thematic publication that examines a specific issue affecting children. It also summarises news, events and campaigns, and publications.

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Photo: Neil Cooper / Save the Children

Welcome to the Child Rights Information Network's newsletter. There has been a relaunch this edition, with a new design and format. You will notice more space is dedicated to thematic features, so that we can respond to the diverse interests of our members around the world. And while the changes are significant, it is not at the cost of continuity. The CRIN tradition of providing information to organisations or individuals interested in keeping abreast of child rights news, events, research, and publications is steadfastly upheld. We would be pleased to hear your views of the changes.

In other areas, CRIN’s website is featuring the forthcoming United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children scheduled for September 2001. It will bring together government leaders, heads of state, NGOs, children's advocates and young people to review progress made since the World Summit on Children in 1990 and to renew that commitment. Also, following the International Conference on War Affected Children in Winnipeg, Canada last month, CRIN has launched an email list on Children and Armed Conflict.

This specially extended thirteenth edition of the newsletter, explores an important yet largely unexamined topic: the relationship between children’s rights and macroeconomic analysis and policy. Our articles reveal and clarify this often hidden link and explain how children are likely to be affected by macroeconomic choices.

Stefan de Vylder and John Micklewright introduce the issues of children and macroeconomics. De Vylder explains how children bear most of the impact of fiscal and monetary policies, trade and exchange rate strategies, as well as those relating to adjustment and development. Micklewright illustrates the importance of giving a child dimension to economic variables and of introducing measures of child well-being to the framework of analysis.

We draw on examples from around the world to illustrate their conclusions. In South Africa, Vietnam, the Philippines, and the UK, authors analyse the impact on children of policies that aim to alleviate poverty. In El Salvador, we examine how structural adjustment programmes have increased poverty and social inequity. Other authors remind us that trade liberalisation, globalisation, and financial integration must place children ahead of economic prosperity. Two of our authors make strong statements in support of the cancellation of foreign debts.

The views of these authors provide an interesting complement to the challenge by citizens' groups of a global economic process that they say is controlled by transnational corporations, the WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions. Following protests in Prague this September and Seattle last November, there is growing recognition that structural adjustment programmes and lending policies are driving millions of people including children around the world deeper into poverty and causing environmental destruction. Some argue that poor countries should be able to negotiate their own debt payments, after providing health care, education and basic services.

At the World Bank a new study of global poverty that was released this September adds greater recognition to the fact that "economic growth is crucial but often not sufficient to create conditions in which the world's poorest people can improve their lives".

Human development objectives and the best interests of the child should permeate macroeconomic policies. This might ease further distress in continuing catastrophes where NGOs, United Nations organisations and bilateral donors are called upon to provide humanitarian and relief assistance to victims of devastating macroeconomic policies. Further there is a greater need for corporations to ensure greater social responsibility in their operations and behaviour.

We hope that this issue of the CRIN Newsletter will contribute to the advancement of a debate that has, for too long, been divorced from the concerns of families and children. Childhood is a particularly vulnerable stage of the life cycle and children are especially sensitive to economic shocks. Conversely, children and their successful health and educational development are the cornerstones of long-term economic prosperity.

State violence against children discussed

The Committee on the Rights of the Child concluded its three week autumn session, issuing its final observations on reports submitted by Finland, Burundi, the UK (Isle of Man), Tajikistan, Colombia, the Central African Republic, the Marshall Islands, Slovakia, and the Comoros.

The nine countries, in keeping with their obligations as states parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, presented the Committee with written reports on their efforts to promote children's rights, and sent government delegations to discuss the documents and answer questions from the Committee's ten independent experts.

Over the course of its current session, the Committee held a day-long discussion on the subject of "state violence against children", in which government representatives, inter- and non-governmental organisations and other international bodies participated. The Committee adopted recommendations calling for an in-depth study to be carried out on the issue of state violence against children, and for exploration of the different types of violent treatment where children were victims to identify their causes, the extent of such violence, and its impact on children. It urged states parties, among other things, to repeal any legislation that allowed the imposition of unacceptable sentences for offences committed before the age of 18.

The Committee's next session, its twenty sixth, will be held from 8 to 26 January 2001 (see calendar of events in this newsletter for more details).

Source: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Preparations underway for Children's Special Session

The First Substantive Session of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session on Children was held from 30 May to 2 June. It was one of three planning meetings for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children which will be held in September 2001 to mark the tenth anniversary of the World Summit for Children and review achievements.

International and national NGOs attended the session. A Child Rights Caucus was organised by the task group on child rights of the NGO Committee for UNICEF and Human Rights Watch. Operations of this caucus, which is lead by a small and elected co-ordinating group are continuing between prepatory committees.

Three key outcomes for children were proposed to guide the work of the Special Session and to help develop strategies for children for the next ten years and beyond. They are (1) a good start in life, nurturing, caring and a safe environment, (2) the opportunity to complete a good, quality education, (3) the opportunity for adolescents to develop fully their individual capacities in safe and enabling environments.

At the World Summit in 1990 governments endorsed a global plan of action and adopted the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. The Second Substantive session takes place from 29 January to 2 February 2000 (see calender of events for details).

Adapted from UNICEF and the Child Rights Caucus. CRIN has launched a theme desk for the Special Session at http://www.crin.org/features/ungass

Optional protocols to Convention open for signature

More than 63 countries have signed the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child relating to children in armed conflict and the trafficking of children. The first protocol requires states to agree that no one under the age of 18 take direct part in hostilities or be compulsorily recruited into armed forces. It also requires states to raise the minimum age and apply strict safeguards to voluntary recruitment. The second protocol prohibits the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Canada, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have ratified the protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict; and 68 other states have signed it. Bangladesh has ratified the protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and 63 others have signed it.

The date of entry into force of the two separate protocols has not yet been determined. The two separate protocols shall enter into force three months after the deposit of the tenth instrument of ratification or accession, and for each state one month after the date of the deposit of its own instrument of ratification or accession. The protocols were adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 25 May 2000.

Sources: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

Beijing +5 reviews progress for women and girls

There has been progress for girls and women in the last five years, but obstacles remain. This was the main conclusion of the UN General Assembly Special Session for Women in June after progress reports from governments were heard.

UNICEF and the NGO International Network for Girls organised a symposium on the topic of "girls as their own advocates". It allowed girls the opportunity to present testimonies on broad-ranging issues that affect them including armed conflict, child trafficking, community participation, reproductive health, female genital mutilation, and community participation. A panel discussion on the role of media in influencing and limiting girls' choices also included direct participation from girls.

In 1995, governments had met in Beijing and adopted the Beijing Platform for Action. It details 12 critical areas of concern that relate to the human rights of women and girls.

Child labour treaty

The ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour enters into force on 19 November 2000. The treaty requires that states ban children from working in dangerous jobs such as mining and in illegal occupations such as prostitution, pornography and drug trafficking. Signatories include United States of America, Canada, Indonesia, South Africa, Brazil and Mexico. As of 4 October 2000, 32 countries have ratified the treaty to ban the worst forms of child labour, which is the largest number of signatories for any labour agreement in a single year. The ILO Convention was adopted in June 1999.

African Charter on children's rights

The entry into force of the first regional treaty on the rights of the child - the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Children's Charter) - is another positive step towards securing the protection of children's rights.

"The human rights of African children are violated every day of their lives, with severe consequences which extend well beyond their childhood," Amnesty International said.

The African Children's Charter codifies the responsibilities of the state, community and individual in the protection of the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of the child.

States parties will be required to submit reports to an 11-member African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (the Committee), who will monitor compliance with the African Children's Charter. The Committee will be empowered to receive complaints from any person, group or non-governmental organisation recognised by the OAU relating to any matter covered by the treaty. It will also be able to resort to any appropriate method of investigating matters falling within the ambit of the treaty.

The African Children's Charter was adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1990. However it was not until 29 November 1999 that the fifteenth country ratified the Charter, thereby allowing the treaty to enter into force. Presently only 21 out of 53 states of the OAU have ratified the African Children Charter. Despite the fact that the African Children Charter entered into force last year, African governments failed to establish the Committee at the last OAU summit in Lome, Togo in July 2000, due to the lack of candidates nominated by states parties. Only Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritius, Senegal and Togo nominated a total of seven candidates for the election to the Committee of 11 members. The next OAU summit will take place in June 2001 in Lusaka, Zambia.

Source: Amnesty International

International AIDS conference concludes in South Africa

At the closing ceremony of the thirteenth International AIDS Conference in Durban, former South African President Nelson Mandela called for urgent steps to protect the country's children from the HIV/AIDS pandemic. He said that unless the spread of the disease is curbed, it will only get worse, and children will bear the brunt of the impact. There are an estimated 500,000 to 800,000 orphans in South Africa. By 2005, the figure could reach 1.5 million.

"These are not cold statistics," Mandela said. "We are talking about children looking to adults for help. Some are infected and have to learn to live with the disease ... others have to live with the death of family members and siblings."

The AIDS conference took place in July 2000 and brought together for the first time all key players in the pandemic — from HIV-infected children to prostitutes, UN officials, world-renown immunologists and Nobel laureates. The next international AIDS forum will be held in Spain in 2002.

Source: UN Foundation

International conference on war affected children

The weeklong International Conference on War-Affected Children in Winnipeg, Canada, ended with an agreement to free abducted African children and a 14-point action plan to safeguard the rights of war-affected children. Representatives from more than 120 nations attended the conference.

Sudan and Uganda agreed to cooperate in returning 6,000 children kidnapped by the Lord's Resistance Army, a Sudanese rebel force. Canada and Egypt mediated the deal. It remains to be seen whether these commitments will be fulfilled.

The "Agenda for War-Affected Children" adopted at the conference called for all states to implement measures to aid children affected by war, hold child-rights violators accountable, assess the effects of sanctions on children and add child protection units to peacekeeping missions. The agenda was co-sponsored by UNICEF and Canada and will be presented at the UN Special Session on Children next September.

Graca Machel, author of a UN-commissioned report on the plight of children in conflicts presented at the conference, criticised the ministerial action plan for not going far enough. Two separate reports from 50 youth delegates and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) called for tough deadlines for the imposition of international bans on using and abusing children in conflicts and stringent sanctions against any groups that violate the bans. The ministerial action plan did not include these items.

Source: UN Foundation

Nepal conference for the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

In May representatives of 24 governments, including 16 from the Asia-Pacific region together with nearly 100 NGOs, gathered in Kathmandu Nepal for the first conference on the use of child soldiers in the region.

Drawing on research prepared by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, the conference explored the dimensions of the problem in the region, its root causes and effects. The conference also focussed on practical strategies for the prevention of child soldiering and the effective demobilisation and rehabilitation of children subjected to this abuse. Lessons were learnt from other regions and related fields of child labour, trafficking and exploitation. The conference issued a declaration of strong support for the new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention 182. They also called on governments and armed groups to demobilise and stop recruiting under 18s, and urged tighter controls on small arms flows including sanctions against suppliers.

The coalition is now oganising a middle East initiative, with a Regional conference planned for March 2001.

Beyond the broken promises

The World Education Forum in Dakar did not deliver but, as Save the Children UK's Dave Norman reports, organisations concerned with children's rights now have a chance they cannot let slip.

Follow-up on education

In advance of the World Education Forum in April 2000, edition 12 of the CRIN Newsletter focused on education. Here two authors present their views on the successes and failures of the meetings. The website of the World Education Forum and the Dakar Framework of Action are at www2.unesco.org.wef

The World Education Forum was not judged a success by the majority of non-governmental organisations who attended it this spring.

The three-day meeting in Dakar, Senegal, proved a disappointment for my organisation, Save the Children. Speech after speech in the plenary sessions turned the forum into a media event that obliterated constructive dialogue that would have led to effective action.

Even the limited opportunities afforded to delegates to share their experiences with the drafting committee ended in dead-end discussions. The final Dakar Framework for Action failed to incorporate the summaries of round-table debates by delegates or to reflect the richness of practical NGO experience.

Ironically the draft Framework for Action *had* included some of this richness in the run-up to Dakar. Yet it was lost there in a fog of disputes and failures to reach agreements. The Dakar Framework for Action has ended up as an executive summary, not an action plan, outlining six goals backed up by 12 brief "strategies".

But all is far from lost. New opportunities have emerged from the Dakar process, with governments and donors committing themselves to goals that are stronger than the original Jomtein targets drawn up in 1990. Primary education, for example, must be completely free, compulsory and of good quality. Donors pledged that "no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources".

There was also a broad recognition by speakers in Dakar that the 1990s' emphasis on enrolments had often been at the expense of quality. There is now much greater interest on the practical - of finding such ways to make education useful for children.

The challenge is now is to set up real mechanisms that can achieve these bold commitments. The door is open on two fronts. First, the international community will be required to develop "with immediate effect" a global initiative aimed at developing the strategies and mobilising the resources needed to support national efforts. Advocacy efforts at international meetings, such as the G8 summit and annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank, will aim to move donors on from merely endorsing the Dakar framework and to translating their pledges into more meaningful proposals and strategies.

Most importantly, though, civil society has been given a leading role for the first time. Governments in Dakar agreed to "develop or strengthen existing national plans of action by 2002 at the latest… through more transparent and democratic processes involving stakeholders, especially people's representatives, community leaders, parents, learners, NGOs and civil society."

At Dakar, there emerged an enthusiasm to listen and learn from the experienced civil society groups that were represented there; and the majority of government delegations held detailed discussions with NGO representatives from their countries. Undoubtedly this offers an unprecedented opportunity for organisations concerned with child rights to shape the direction of governments' education programme as national action plans are developed over the next two years.

David Norman is education advocacy advisor at Save the Children UK

What next after Dakar? The Global Campaign for Education, says Alam Rahman, and no one will be let off its hook.

The World Education Forum marked the end of the dismal decade where the promise of Education for All by the year 2000 came and went unrealised.

The numbers make familiar but unacceptable reading: 880 million adults unable to read or write, more than 125 million children never inside a classroom, 150 million children dropping out of school in the first couple of years.

Determined to stop the pattern, the Global Campaign for Education was launched before the start of the World Education Forum to “mobilise public pressure on governments to fulfil their promises to provide free, quality education for all people, in particular children and women”. The campaign, which is continuing, is led by Oxfam International, ActionAid, Education International, the Global March Against Child Labour, and several southern-based education networks.

In the months leading up to Dakar, one of the Global Campaign for Education’s central demands was that more resources be earmarked for education; by the time of the conference many key players had agreed to the principle that no good national education plan should fail for lack of resources. An important demand was that civil society be involved throughout the process; and most governments accepted that people’s participation must not be neglected. The World Bank announced a fast-track programme of accelerated funding for countries with a serious commitment to education. The UNDP and UNICEF endorsed the campaign and lobbied for the same goals. And in the background, the interests of civil society were represented by the Global Campaign for Education in bargaining over the final Dakar Framework of Action.

So what happened? Certainly not everything that one might have hoped for, but on the whole not a bad result. The Dakar Framework for Action strongly reaffirmed the goal of ensuring that by 2015 all children have access to and are able to complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality. The director-general of UNESCO will convene a high level meeting annually to keep up the pressure. Governments have agreed to prepare comprehensive National Education For All plans by 2002 at the latest, and to involve civil society in every step of the process. The final text of the conference affirms that “no country seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal for lack of resources”. The Dakar Framework further states that the international community will launch with immediate effect “a global initiative aimed at developing the strategies and mobilising the resources needed to provide effective support to national efforts”.

Still, the bottom line is that governments did not commit. The Global Campaign for Education had pushed for all governments to commit four per cent of GDP to basic education and demanded that donor governments target eight per cent of their aid budgets to the same. Governments weren’t ready to make that commitment, preferring instead to remain unaccountable. The new global initiative was given no structure or schedule, so no one can say what or when it will deliver. Without significant delegation of authority to southern governments, it could simply become just another forum for the same old donor politics.

Weak in some sections and strong in others, the text of the Dakar Framework can be considered a mixed success. The ultimate test is what happens now. As one participant put it, “the real difference between Dakar and the last education forum in 1990 was the presence of civil society and a sense that the debate on Education for All was public rather than a private affair for government technocrats”. The challenge is to organise and agitate now, knowing that, without strong and sustained public pressure, the promises made in Dakar will evaporate. As Tom Bediako of Education International (who helped found the campaign) said in his closing address, the Global Campaign for Education will “haunt governments and multilaterals and continue to hold them to account”.

Alam Rahman works with the Global March Against Child Labour.
Information about the Global Campaign on Education is available on the Oxfam website at www.oxfam.org

Photo: Eli Reed / Magnum Photos

Macroeconomics have a direct impact on children's lives, but the links are only starting to be recognised. CRIN's guest writer Stefan de Vylder draws some disturbing connections and argues early action is the answer.

Macroeconomic policies are rarely discussed in connection with children. This means that most people working for the rights of the child regard macroeconomics with indifference or suspicion; and most of the work of economists is blind to children's needs.

Globally, young people under the age of 18 represent one third of the world"s population, and in many developing countries children constitute the majority. Still, economic decisions very rarely take into account the interests of the child, or the impact on them. Indeed children do not merit even a mention in most major economic textbooks. At best, there is a paragraph or two about "human capital" and the importance of investing in education.

The children´s own voices are never heard, despite the fact that many economic decisions directly or indirectly affect them.

There is no such thing as "child-neutral" economic policies. There is a need to make children more visible in economic policy-making. There is also great scope for better cooperation and understanding between economists and children, and between economists and advocacy groups working on children's behalf.

Economic analysis can be used to demonstrate that good economic policies and the best interest of the child often go hand-in-hand, and that while the financial costs of creating a more child-friendly society are often small, the social and economic benefits of linking these interests are enormous. To invest in children is a win-win strategy: the individual child and society benefit as a whole.

To illustrate the ways in which economic policies affect the situation of children, imagine a set of concentric circles moving outwards (see Figure 1). At the hub are policies and legislation that explicitly target children including public provision of primary health and education, and regulations against the exploitation of child labour.

Figure 1. The Child at the Centre.

Source: de Vylder, 2000

In a second circle are policies and institutions that have a strong but less direct impact. Here are traditional social security and welfare policies, most redistributive tax and public expenditure policies, and in general, policies that directly affect the family.

In a third circle are macroeconomic policies in a conventional sense where the impact may be more indirect, but still strong. This includes fiscal policies (policies related to taxes and government expenditure); monetary policies (which influence the interest, inflation and exchange rates), as well as trade policies, the managing of external capital flows and the foreign debt.

In a final circle is the overall policy environment or framework, including the choice of development strategy and the globalisation process.

While the policies in the inner circle are usually discussed in connection with the rights of the child, policies belonging to the outer circles also affect children either directly or indirectly through their effect on the family's economic and social situation. There are examples where the links between macroeconomic policies and children demonstrate the direct impact the one has on the other. The relationship between trade liberalisation and child labour in export industries is an obvious example.

The choice between inflation and unemployment represents the classic dilemma of macroeconomic policies. Far from being child neutral, inflation affects countries, social classes and age groups in quite different ways. In high and medium-income countries with relatively well-developed financial markets, young families with children tend to finance the purchase of new homes with the help of credit from the formal credit market. Among low-income households, especially in poor countries, money for a new house is often raised on the informal credit market, which includes relatives, friends or local moneylenders. Generally, debts are incurred by families when children are small and repaid when the children have grown up.

For this reason, moderate inflationary policies tend to have a less negative impact on young families with children, who are often indebted. The erosion of their debts through inflation may even be in their interest. On the other hand, austere monetary policies, which reduce the rate of inflation while raising the real rate of interest, tend to be particularly harmful for young parents with children.

Monetary policies leading to high real rates of interest can thus be labelled child-hostile, since they have a direct bearing on the affordability of acceptable dwellings. Moreover, if there is a choice between some inflation and unemployment, many young families would probably prefer more employment, even if this were to mean a slightly higher inflation.

This would make sense since there is a wealth of evidence that suggests that unemployment (especially long-term) is very harmful to children economically, socially, and psychologically.

In poor countries the effects of unemployment can be dramatic because economic margins are small or non-existent. The child's very right to survival may be threatened by the parents' unemployment. In addition to suffering severe economic loss, family disintegration often tends to follow. Clearly, these associated costs of unemployment, which include family disintegration and possibly increased child labour, rising drop-out rates and even juvenile delinquency due to parents unemployment, are not fully captured in conventional economic analyses.

An anti-poverty, child-friendly strategy must therefore pay much attention to job creation without embarking on imprudent policies that lead to a high rate of inflation. Parents need employment in order to support their children; and children and adolescents need to feel that education is a worthwile investment and that they will be welcome in the labour market.

Fiscal policies, or policies related to taxes and government expenditure, are at the core of macroeconomic policy choices. A state budget reflects the overall priorities of the government. It is essentially a political not a technical instrument as it translates policies and political platforms into expenditures and taxes. The analysis of state budgets is of paramount importance in order to assess the links between macroeconomic policies and children. The choices behind state budgets have an impact on children's lives both directly and indirectly.

Children are affected indirectly by budget expenditures and revenues, which determine the development of fiscal deficits or surpluses, the sources of finance, and the amount of foreign borrowing. These fiscal policies influence inflation, unemployment, income distribution, foreign debt obligations, taxes, and subsidies that affect the families' social and economic situation and consequently children.

State budgets can have a direct impact in areas of concern for children such as: nutrition, child and maternal health, water and sanitation, early childhood development and basic education, social welfare, leisure and cultural activities, and child protection measures.

From a child's perspective, massive foreign indebtedness is exceedingly harmful. Foreign credit may appear a comfortable short-term option and, if the borrowed money is invested wisely, may have some positive long-terms effects. But taking up foreign loans today also implies a mortgaging of the future and often boils down to theft from tomorrow's children and adolescents who will have to repay the debts.

External economic policies such as trade policies, the managing of external capital flows and of foreign debt, and, more broadly, the so-called process of globalisation fall into the definition of macroeconomics and do impact children. Structural adjustment programmes and foreign debt are good examples of how macroeconomic policies can neglect children's rights.

Many structural adjustment programmes have been designed in open contradiction to provisions in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 28 of the Convention, for example, states in unequivocal terms that governments have the obligation to “make primary education compulsory and available free to all”. The introduction of school fees, which has often accompanied structural adjustment, is simply incompatible with the CRC.

In a large number of other areas such as health and social security, structural adjustment programmes often neglect the priority that children’s rights should be given. In general, structural adjustment involves a change in relative “prices” between paid and unpaid work in favour of paid work. Invisible work done by women is not counted and, when compared with production for the market, the reproductive and caretaking burdens normally shouldered by women are devalued.

Therefore, for parents the combined additional costs of raising children and the need to generate additional cash income provide strong incentives for children leaving school and contributing to family income at an earlier age than before. A common pattern sees the girl child as the main loser when school fees are introduced or when unemployment obliges the family to take children out of school.

In order to safeguard the best interest of the child a change in emphasis in macroeconomic policy-making is needed. Child-friendly economic strategies and policies should be characterised by:
• emphasis on equity and policies that support an inclusive, broad-based and participatory pattern of growth;
• predictability and stability;
• emphasis on human development and the accumulation of social capital and trust, which includes great attention to the needs of the reproductive and community spheres of the economy;
• emphasis on job creation, and job security;
• cautious and sustainable foreign debt policies, including a strong emphasis on avoidance of the debt trap;
• a very long-term perspective.

The point to stress here is that macroeconomic policies are far from age- or gender-neutral. A perspective, which recognises the rights of children and women, has to be present *while* macroeconomic policies are being designed, not *after* they are finalised. The best interest of the child should permeate macroeconomic policies, embracing fiscal policies, monetary policies, and exchange rate policies, as early and as comprehensively as possible. It is not enough to advocate that a larger share of public expenditure goes to social sector development. Trade and exchange rate policies may have more of an impact on child development than, for example, the relative size of the state budget allocated to health and education.

It is imperative to avoid the situation where hard core economic policies are decided in isolation from human development objectives while NGOs, United Nations organisations and bilateral donors are called upon to look after humanitarian aspects and give relief assistance to victims of devastating macroeconomic policies.

Dr Stefan de Vylder is associate professor in development economics and currently working as an independent consultant. He has written *Macroeconomic Policies and Children’s Rights* (2000), Stockholm: Rädda Barnen.

Children and macroeconomics in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

In implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child economic resources have an important role to play. Article 4, on implementation of rights in the Convention (which is also called the umbrella article) sets out States’ overall obligations to implement all the rights in the Convention. It reads:

State parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognised in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources, and where needed, with the framework of international cooperation.

Other articles in the Convention also have application:
• Article 5. Parental guidance and the child’s evolving capacities.
• Article 6. The child’s right to life and maximum survival and development.
• Article 18. Parents’ joint responsibility assisted by the state.
• Article 23. The rights of disabled children.
• Article 26. The child’s right to benefit from social security.
• Article 27. The child’s right to an adequate standard of living.
• Article 28. The child’s right to education.
• Article 29. The aims of education.

Integrating child rights into economic policy formulations require tools for analysis. Statistical information is required by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its Guidelines for Periodic Reports. This includes variations between areas of the country and between groups of children. As well it includes changes in the status of children; changes in budget allocations and expenditure for sectors serving children; and changes in the extent of international cooperation received or contributed for the realisation of children’s rights.

These guidelines outline that for the implementation of article 4, further statistical information is required including information on:
• proportion of budget devoted to social services expenditures for children, including health, welfare and education, at the central, regional and local levels, and where appropriate at the federal and provincial levels
• proportion of international aid at the multilateral and bilateral levels allocated to programmes from children and the promotion of their rights and, where appropriate, the assistance received from regional and international financial institutions.

Adapted from “Implementation of Rights in the Convention: Article 4” in Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1998), New York

Figuring the case

Precise data about children's lives can help put their needs at the centre of macroeconomic debates. John Micklewright sums up.

World events constantly remind us of this simple truth: the real purpose of economic policy is to improve people's lives.

In the European Union, creating the single European currency stresses that the purpose of closer integration is to raise the standard of living and quality of life of Europe's citizens. Similarly the goal of the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is to raise the living standards of more than 400 million people and develop more humane and democratic societies. Free markets and the reduction of the role of the state are two of the instruments to achieve those goals and are important aspects of the transition process. But, they, in themselves, are not the ultimate aims of what is taking place.

So, given economic policy is about improving the lives of people, the first step in linking macroeconomics and children is a simple one. Data can be harnessed effectively to highlight the quantitative importance of the child population. Children and young people under 18 are far from being a group of marginal importance (see Figure 1). Overall, 37 per cent of the world's population are children. In Africa, children actually form the majority of the population, while in Europe nearly 25 per cent of the people are children. They form a large fraction of the world's population. While figures of this kind may be familiar to advocates and researchers working on behalf of children, my impression is that they are not well-known to many of those responsible for economic policy.

Figure 2 shows the proportion of households in the European Union that have a child aged 0-18. The average figure for countries is one third, with Spain and Ireland registering over 40 per cent. Demographic data about children are readily available and their various uses should form a key part in any strategy aiming to raise the profile of children in economic debate.

Economic statistics that form part of the macroeconomic debate fall under various headings, including budgets, interest rates, prices, incomes and labour markets.

Government budgets can be broken down so that estimates can be made regarding the proportion devoted to children. The figures will be sensitive to the assumptions made to attribute expenditures that are clearly identified with children, but this does not mean that this exercise should not be attempted. Nevertheless, it needs to be remembered that even expenditures which are clearly aimed at adults often bring benefits to children.

Any discussion of government budgets and children needs to recognise that in many countries expenditure relevant to children is decentralised, especially where health and education are concerned. A concern with child well-being thus implies a strong interest in systems of intergovernmental transfers that redistribute income from richer regions to poorer regions or down to local government.

Interest rates and prices are key macroeconomic variables. In commenting in a recent UNICEF report on the mechanisms required to trace the impact of monetary union in Europe on children, Oxford economist Tony Atkinson notes that measures are needed of the cost of borrowing for families, just as they have been developed for the cost of borrowing for businesses. Macroeconomic models feature *the* interest rate, but anyone who needs to borrow money knows that the cost of credit may vary enormously. A price index for families with children will differ from one for pensioners due to the differences in expenditure patterns. (Atkinson calls for a European price index for families with children.)

National income per head is only a rough guide to the average income of families with children. The position of households with children *within* the income distribution is key. The USA has the highest GNP per capita of any large country, but despite this it ranks number 12 in a group of 25 industrialised countries in terms of the proportion of its children living in absolute poverty.

The unemployment rate is a standard measure of whether a country's labour market is strong or weak. But more relevant for child well-being is the proportion of children living in a household where no adult works. Changes in the overall unemployment rate may not be a good guide to this. In fact, in several European countries the jobless household rate has moved in a different way to that of the unemployment one. In the UK unemployment fell by over three per cent from 1985-96, but the rate of households with children where no adult was in work rose by over four per cent.

Also important are direct measures of the children the well-being of children themselves. Information about living standards at the household level, for example household income, is not enough if we wish to know how the children within each household are faring. Policy directed towards children may involve targeting resources at mothers rather than fathers. Data supplying direct measures of child well-being should not only allow the position of children relative to adults to be assessed, but should also show differences between children. Particularly important are the variations between boys and girls.

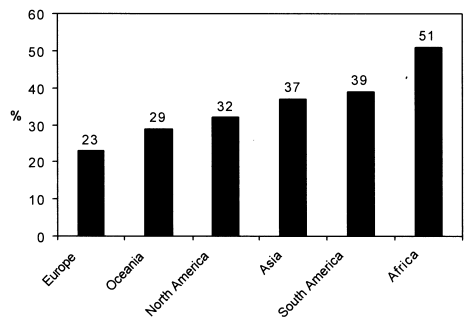
To assess the impact of any economic policy, aspects of child well-being that need to be measured include material well-being, survival and health, education and development, and social inclusion (especially for adolescents). Broadly speaking, these dimensions are contained in the UNDP Human Development Index and its derivatives and they reflect the approach to human well-being of the 1998 Nobel Laureate in Economics, Amartya Sen who has placed emphasis on the capabilities of people to function and thrive in life.

Let's take one example, that of survival and health. A number of indicators are relevant to this and UNICEF's annual publication *State of the World's Children* ranks countries by their under-five mortality rate. Together with infant and maternal mortality, this is of major importance in its own right, but is also correlated with other dimensions of well-being for which data are less available. Indeed, like demographic data, mortality data often have the attraction of being relatively abundant and up-to-date. Child mortality responds well to investment in basic social services and to the raising of the incomes of the poor. Mortality data are of considerable help in throwing light on countries' economic success or failure. Immunisation rates are another indicator of considerable use and may have the advantage over mortality data of responding more quickly to economic adjustment.

Economic policy is about improving the lives of people and the most basic data of all, demographic, can be used to underline this fact. The key economic variables on which economic policy operates can all be given a child dimension. Add to this the use of direct measures to assess various aspects of child well-being and you can build a powerful picture of the reality of children's lives and a persuasive method for influencing macroeconomic policies.

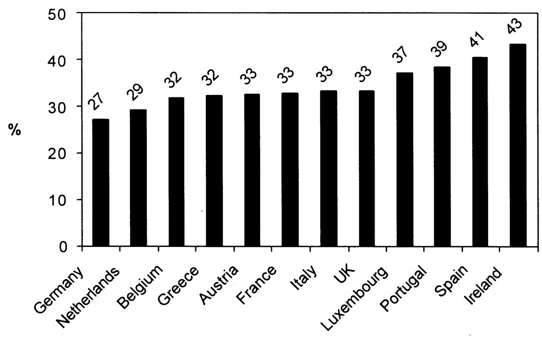
John Micklewright is head of research at the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. This article is a summary of the paper titled "Macroeconomic Data and Children" (2000) and has been published with the permission of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Figure 1.
Children (aged 0-18) in the world's population (%)



Source: UNICEF, State of the World Children, 1998
in UNICEF, Macroeconomic Data and Children, 2000

Figure 2.
Proportion of households in EU countries with children (aged 0-18) (%)



Source: Labour Force Survey Results 1999, Eurostat in UNICEF, Macroeconomic Data and Children, 2000

The rights way forward

Judith Ennew explains how rights can broaden our understanding of children's position within the economy.

The modern concept of childhood excludes children from economic life by insisting they are economically dependent on adults and that they confine their activities to the spheres of education and play.

This concept also decrees that they do no work, have no political views and possess no money. Yet this construct of childhood bears little relation to the lives of most children in most countries today. For example, children throughout the world work and produce value, yet their labour is not counted when Gross Domestic Products (GDP) are calculated. Children are also significant consumers who make purchases with their own money according to their own tastes and also shop on behalf of their families. And while the work that children do in school represents a significant contribution to future wealth for themselves, their families and their nations, schooling appears only as a cost in national budgets as opposed to a gain.

Economic rights are not generally thought of as rights that children exercise. One exception to this is child labour and cases where child workers negotiate their levels of pay. Yet even here there are limitations. Child labour campaigns tend to concentrate on protecting and rescuing children, rather than supporting their economic rights as workers. This reduces child workers to victims and objects of concern, rather than valuing them as producers of goods and as economic actors in their own right.

Apart from studies of child labour, most economic research on children examines the social costs of childhood although there is now an emerging body of research on the economic ideas of children in the West. This research tends to follow conventional approaches derived from child development; and the advantage for planners includes that it is possible to analyse and predict trends in saving and consuming behaviour. But there are limitations to these approaches to children's economic rights. Like child labour debates, both are reductionist. Both genres of research, examining the social cost of childhood and the economic ideas of children, treat childhood as important only in terms of the adults that children will become.

However, a human rights framework permits other perspectives of children's economic rights, particularly if the guiding principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are taken seriously. Article 4, for example, obliges governments to fulfil children's rights to the maximum extent of their available resources, not just after all other population groups have been provided for and not considering children as a cost to society. Thus education, health and protection are rights, rather than privileges or favours bestowed by adults. Also, under the various CRC provisions for family life and adequate standards of living, states must support parents and guardians to ensure that children's rights are secured.

It follows from this that part of the proper business of governance is to develop information bases for routine 'children's budgets and audits' that demonstrate the way in which fiscal decisions have an impact on children's lives at all levels. Information about the contribution children make to national income would be a normal component of these data, as would their opinions on the way national budgets affect their enjoyment of rights.

Judith Ennew is with the Centre for Family Research at the University of Cambridge

Governments don't have to have booming economies before they can set up good quality basic social services for all their people. Santosh Mehrotra offers alternatives.

During the course of world summits and global conferences in the 1990s, the international community took a significant step by declaring its commitment to making basic social services (BSS) universally available.

That pledge covered health (including reproductive health, low-cost water and sanitation) and basic education. While some progress has been made, the truth remains that access is far from universal and the results of inadequate and inferior services, especially for children in the developing countries, are there for all to see.

A UNICEF study of more than 30 developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America has just been completed and it reveals how much governments and donors are spending on basic services, the equity of that spending, and its efficiency and effectiveness.

Governments often make proud claims about how much they spend on health and education, when in fact not all such services benefit the poor. By denying citizens access to the basic services, governments often violate their citizens' human rights.

There is a synergy between these social interventions and income poverty reduction, social development and economic growth. Interventions in any one of these will have an impact on all the others. By utilising these synergies, many countries have achieved unusually good results in social development early in their development process relative to their level of income. These high-achievers demonstrate that it is possible to address the non-income dimensions of poverty and improve social indicators regardless of the level of economic growth. Approximately $206 to $216 billion (in 1995 prices) is needed to provide basic social services to all, but only $136 billion is currently being spent. Expenditure falls short by about $70 to $80 billion per year.

The new doctrines of so-called small government and extreme fiscal austerity followed in many developing countries flatly contradict the historical experience of the industrialised world. In order for developing countries to grow, their governments will have to grow. However, the experience of developing countries over the last 50 years shows that economic growth does not always reduce poverty.

Ten steps are needed to close the gap between the rhetoric about good quality basic social services and their universal availability:

1. Universal access to BSS is possible regardless of the level of per capita income – that is the lesson for policy makers from the experience of the high-achievers.
2. The historical experience of both industrialized and high-achieving developing countries demonstrates that the state must guarantee BSS for all.
3. Relying on economic growth to eventually trickle down to the social sectors is inimical to the first call for children.
4. Contrary to past practice, macro-economic stabilisation can be achieved while protecting the social by inter-sectoral reallocations, and larger revenues.
5. The synergies emanating from an integrated package of BSS, focused on the whole child, can be sectors, especially the basic level.
6. Most governments possess little information on public spending on BSS, hampering policy decisions.
7. Additional resources can be mobilized for BSS by intra-sectoral reallocation within the social sectors, tapped to increase efficiency and reduce costs.
8. The relevant ministries of donor governments need to achieve consistency between aid policies on the one hand and trade policies on the other.
9. There should be greater effort by donor countries, especially the largest donors, to increase ODA as well as its share to basic services.
10. There should be greater effort by donor countries to end the burden of the debt on the HIPC countries to release resources for basic services.

Santosh Mehrotra is senior economic adviser at the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

Children first - the view from South Africa

New research sheds valuable light on the importance given to alleviating child poverty and the obstacles to success. Mastoera Sadan reports.

The South African government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1995, promising to place children first in its efforts to alleviate poverty.

So now the government is obligated towards fulfilling the CRC commitment and to undertake measures to meet children's economic, social and cultural rights to the maximum extent of available resources.

This pledge to children is clearly reflected in section 28 of the Bill of Rights which enshrines children's rights in the South African Constitution and in the government's National Programme of Action for Children in South Africa (NPA). The NPA provides a framework that promotes and aims to protect the rights of the child. This framework tries to ensure that children's needs remain a priority for policy makers and government officials responsible for resource allocation and service delivery. Through the process of the NPA, the government aims to integrate children's needs into all budgetary decisions thereby mainstreaming children in the government's poverty alleviation strategy.

Children make up over 47 per cent of South Africa's population, yet still suffer from poor nutrition, inadequate health services, clean water, sanitation and basic education. The budget is the government's most important economic tool as it translates political priorities and policies into expenditure and delivery of services. Budgetary programmes, specifically socio-economic expenditures, affect the well-being and life opportunities of children directly. The South African government's commitment to social service delivery for children in the face of many competing needs highlights the importance of the government budget in alleviating child poverty.

The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA)s Children's Budget Project monitors and evaluates the South African government's implementation of the CRC through its National Programme of Action. The project undertakes research that tracks government spending on basic social service programmes targeted towards children in the key social sectors of health, welfare and education. The research paints a national picture and provides baseline data on children and budgets. In addition it reveals government spending on children through the development of an indicator framework that monitors outlay.

Although the provision of many services needed by children involves the collaboration of two or more sectors, research is undertaken sector by sector. As budgets are drawn up along departmental lines, this approach, while recognising the intersectoral nature of service provision to children, ensures the link between departmental responsibility and allocation of limited resources towards children.

The research:
• identifies sector policy priorities by evaluating current service delivery to children through an historical and sector situation analysis;
• collates and presents detailed department budgetary data;
• analyses the extent to which departmental budgets at the programme level reflect the shift in policy priorities;
• proposes opportunities for further reprioritisation;
• recommends improvements in service delivery towards children;
• identifies specific indicators that may be used to monitor shifts in government spending on children.

Most recently, the Children’s Budget Project analysed government commitment to child poverty alleviation examining whether children are prioritised in policy, legislation, budgets and service delivery in the health, welfare, education and justice sectors.

The research findings indicate that there is a plethora of policies and legislation aimed at improving the well-being of children that has been put in place since the first democratic government was elected in 1994.

In budgetary allocations children are given priority to some extent, through transfers such as the child support grant in the welfare sector; increases in expenditures in the department of justice’s services to fight against child sex abuse and gang crime in poor communities and increases in the real value of the income of poor households reliant on pension payment.

However, the main obstacle to children fully realising their rights is the problems impeding service delivery. These include lack of access to services due to cost and distance, poor and differential quality of services, inadequate infrastructure and limited human and material resources.

Children are the majority of both today’s and tomorrow’s population in South Africa. Placing children at the centre of the economic process and monitoring the implementation of the CRC by examining resource allocation makes an important contribution to the children’s rights debate and allows for sustainable socio-economic development for all peoples in South Africa.

Mastoera Sadan is project manager of the Children’s Budget Project at IDASA

Can child poverty be abolished in the UK?

Tim Marsh takes a hard look at a recent government pledge.

Article 27 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to "a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social well being".

Yet, according to a recent UNICEF report *Child Poverty in Rich Nations* the UK has the fourth largest incidence of relative child poverty amongst industrialised nations. A fifth of the UK's children lived in poverty in the 1990s. Government figures indicated that in 1998/1999 there were 4.5 million children living in poverty, contrasting with 1.4 million in 1979. At the same time, child poverty in most industrialised countries has remained static or fallen in the last 20 years.

Children who grow up in poverty have poorer attendance records at school and are less likely to continue into further education. They are more likely to have poor standards of literacy and numeracy. These differences are apparent from when they are 22 months old. As they grow up they are also more likely to earn lower hourly wages, become unemployed, go to prison or become single parents.

The scale of the problem in the UK was recognised by the government in 1999. With increasing evidence that poverty passes on from generation to generation, the government announced its "historic aim to end child poverty in the UK by 2020". *Opportunity for All* was released in 1999. It is the first of what are to be annual reports on poverty and social exclusion. The report, which commits the government to ending poverty in 20 years and halving it within 10, contained a range of indicators of poverty including absolute and relative income, health, housing, crime, lone-parenthood, and educational achievement.

But while a multi-dimensional approach to tackling poverty is necessary, the Child Poverty Action Group also believes it is crucial that the government recognises the importance of adequate income. A "minimum income standard" could be set at what the government considered to be a "minimum level of decent living without major deprivations or exclusions and the income level, which gives access to it". The statistical measure of poverty most commonly used by
it is the "half of average incomes after housing costs"(Households Below Average Income) measure. While HBAI is a useful measure of inequality, it is not a measure of income adequacy.

The government has acknowledged the extra cost of children and directed extra support to households with children. Child benefits which are payable to all families has risen by up to 36 per cent. The government has introduced Working Families Tax Credits, which are in-work benefits that guarantee a minimum income for households with children. The government estimates that by 2001 the extra spending on children will amount to £6 billion.

Achieving full employment has also been the main focus of the government's measures to end child poverty. The introduction of various schemes encourages various groups, particularly lone parents back into work, providing help and incentives to find work.

Although unemployment has fallen in the UK in recent years, child poverty rates increased due to the distribution of employment amongst different types of family. In 1998/1999, one in three children lived in families where no one was in work. This number had doubled since 1979 and is higher than any industrialised country except Ireland. This is attributable to inequality of earnings.

Opportunity for All said that different family types face different risks of falling into poverty:
• 63 per cent of lone parent families live in poverty.
• Couples with children account for the largest number of people in poverty (4.7 million).
• 36 per cent of children live in a family where no one is in full time work.

Analysis of Government measures to tackle poverty have found that measures announced in budgets since May 1997 will reduce the number of children in poverty by 800,000 by 2002. As many as 89 per cent of children in the UK will benefit. The poverty expert David Piachaud concludes that "this represents a most significant step on the Prime Minister's 20-year mission to end child poverty".

But more needs to be done. To achieve the goal for 2020 requires acceleration in the future. If the current rate of progress were maintained, a very big 'if', only two-thirds of child poverty would be abolished in 20 years. Without radical changes in taxation, current policies would only reduce poverty to 1979 levels.

Providing jobs for all those able to work will only reduce child poverty by half. More specific measures are needed, such as a minimum income standard for all families with children, whether they are in work or not. Some people cannot work and more should be done to raise their benefit levels.

Tim Marsh is with the Child Poverty Action Group. For more information refer to *Setting a Governmental Minimum Income Standard: the next steps*, J. Veit Wilson, "Poverty" 105, (2000), London.

The price of union

The move to achieve economic and monetary union within the European Union is a huge experiment. Bill Bell considers what it means for children.

For the new currency to be managed properly, policy instruments such as the money supply and the setting of interest rates, will have to be centralised for all EU countries who join the scheme. The exchange rate of the new currency on the international money markets will also be part of this brief-which will be handled by the new, independent, European Central Bank (ECB) whose foremost task will be to keep prices stable and inflation low.

Economic and monetary union (EMU) remains for the moment a barely tested concept so any assessment of its impact on children can only be speculation. However, it is possible by looking EMU's strengths and weaknesses to start the process.

EMU's fans trumpet its contribution to macroeconomic growth, stability and employment, benefits achieved by removing fluctuations in exchange rates between countries trading within the EU. Then as a single capital market develops, investments will be moved more easily as currency risks are no longer a concern.

The savings that should result will also boost overall economic activity and the common currency pricing across Europe will have a direct impact on competition.

Indirect benefits of monetary union are also likely to exist. It is argued that the Euro will help deliver low, stable inflation. This will lead to a sustained increase in economic activity, because previously high inflation economies can enjoy the benefits of long term low inflation rates.

The dividends from economic growth will filter through to investors and workers in the form of higher returns, wage and salary increases, new jobs, improved public services and welfare benefits. Furthermore the competitive pressures will help drive down the cost of raising children, aided by lower inflation rate.

But there are some clouds. There are definite risks associated with monetary union, and like some of the benefits, they are indirect and likely to filter down to children via factors associated with growth, stability, and employment.

The first risk is one associated with deflation, where the push for price stability becomes detrimental to job creation and economic adjustment. Indeed families with dependent children might gain from moderate inflation and an emphasis on employment creation in economic policy-making.

Problems may also arise if the convergence of national economies goes less smoothly than hoped, with monetary union favouring some member states more than others. Other risks relate to the difficulties in managing the mix of fiscal and monetary policies at European Union and member state levels. Monetary union takes away a government's control of its monetary policy, a useful shock absorber when faced with a changing situation. This leaves only fiscal policy as a way of stabilising demand and redistributing income.

However, when, in December 1996 member states agreed to set a three per cent limit of GDP on the size of their budget deficits, they also restricted elements of fiscal policy. These limits might prevent a smooth, rapid adjustment to economic fluctuations thus increasing costs of such adjustments in the form of higher unemployment or cuts in public spending. Children are particularly vulnerable to all these outcomes.

If monetary union succeeds in promoting low inflation and interest rates and steady economic growth, children's quality of life will improve. But certain signals indicate that the process of unification may produce mild to severe destabilising effects. Unless the economic management of the fiscal-monetary policy framework is successful, periodic economic shocks will occur in particular countries and social sectors. For families and children that will mean living in a world of greater instability haunted by threats of unemployment and public service cuts.

Bill Bell is head of advocacy at Save the Children UK and a member of the management team of the Child Rights Information Network. This article is a summary of *Children, Economics and the EU – towards Child Friendly Policies.* (2000), London: Save the Children.

Photo: Lesley Doyle / Save the Children

Photo: Penny Tweedie / Save the Children

European Union trade agreements and children

Most European Union trade policy is blind to the effects on children; but trade agreements can have several kinds of impact. The most direct is on working children. A trade agreement may direct a country's economy towards, or away from, the production of goods that exploit child labour. Trade policies may also have indirect effects on poverty levels by affecting government revenues and the amount spent on schools, health and education. Additionally, trade policies can artificially keep goods out of the market, thereby affecting employment and parents' access to employment.

The Cotonou Agreement signed on 23 June contains various references to child rights. This agreement, which replaces the Lomé Convention is an aid and trade agreement between the European Union and 71 former colonies of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The Cotonou Agreement focuses on poverty reduction as its principal objective, which is to be achieved through political dialogue, development aid and closer economic and trade cooperation.

Whereas children appeared only once in the Lomé Convention in Article 244, the Cotonou Agreement addresses various cooperation strategies that will improve basic social service, take account of local needs and the needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. This includes improving education and training, improving health systems and nutrition, and promoting the fight against HIV/AIDS.

But the most significant progress is contained in Article 26 of the agreement, which states that "cooperation shall also support the establishment of a coherent and comprehensive policy for realising the potential of youth so that they are better integrated into society to achieve their full potential." This includes policies, measures and operations aimed at: (a) protecting the rights of children and youth, especially those of girl children; (b) promoting the skills, energy, innovation and potential of youth in order to enhance their economic, social and cultural opportunities and enlarge their employment opportunities in the productive sector; (c) helping community-based institutions to give children the opportunity to develop their physical, psychological, social and economic potential; and (d) reintegrating into society children in post-conflict situations through rehabilitation programmes.

Furthermore, Article 50 of the agreement also reaffirms a commitment to international labour standards defined by the ILO including the elimination of worst forms of child labour.

All trade agreements should contain references to children and child impact analyses must be undertaken before all trade agreements are struck.

Globalisation makes the books look good at poor children's expense. We should change the trade rules, say Rita Bhatia and Caroline Harper.

It's the same story whether you take the findings of academics or the testimonies of those working in organisations like Save the Children. The influence of globalisation on the lives of poor children and their families has been varied and profound.

Reduced welfare expenditure, increased income inequality between and within countries, as well as social fragmentation and poverty can all in some measure be traced back to this. Trade liberalisation, for example, affects child welfare with factors such as the distribution of economic activity in a society and the effects of employment on income.

Globalisation, as articulated through trade or financial liberalisation, is a policy choice. However, economic globalisation is now prescribed to countries in order "to liberalise national and global markets in the belief that free flows of trade, finance and information will produce the best outcome for growth and human welfare" (UNDP Human Development Report, 1997). This prescription is cause for great concern as it applies to developing countries irrespective of local circumstance, including unfair trade terms, crippling debt burdens, and insufficient participation in determining economic paths.

Children will be increasingly affected as the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) expand into more areas of domestic policy. Young people will feel the loss of government revenue as trade tariffs are reduced because social service budgets will be axed to compensate for the shortfall.

There are two essential questions that need to be asked and answered. What kind of global trade rules should we have and how should global trade rules be balanced so they do not adversely affect social, health and education provisions in poor countries?

The example of trade creep into health, which is related to trade agreements such as TRIPs and GATs, raises important questions about the cost, provision and sustainability of health care both in the North and South. Any re-launching of a new round of trade talks has to consider how trade interacts with human development.

Lundberg and Squire at the World Bank recognise that trade liberalisation and greater openness benefits the majority, but harms the poorest. In *The Simultaneous Evolution of Growth and Inequality* (1999), they state that the poor are vulnerable to international price shifts and "this vulnerability is magnified by the country's openness to trade".

Economic arguments have attempted to show that increased trade contributes to increased income for the household, and that this reduces poverty. Thus it is argued that increased trade improves child welfare because there is an increased demand for labour so wages increase and prices change favourably. This is backed up by the fact that in the past 50 years, average per capita income has more than tripled as global GDP increased nine-fold from $3 trillion to $30 trillion (UNDP 1999).

However, global poverty is more complex than that. Money-metric statistics and income indicators based on the household alone can not identify the range of problems that comprise poverty. It is now more commonplace to observe that poverty and well-being must include social assets such as security, independence and self-respect.

Many arguments for economic globalisation and discussions on growth and inequality fail to address the implications of inadequate poverty measures. These obscure the social costs of struggling to maintain income levels, and these social costs can sometimes be huge as families make sacrifices to maintain essential income. These costs include removing children from school, reducing their nutritional intake, allowing or requiring them to labour inside and outside the home, reduced time to nurture and so on. As a result we sometimes see cases where child poverty increases as incomes increase.

A focus on income and consumption measures in order to alleviate poverty naturally promotes income as a solution. It does not recognise the costs of maintaining income levels during times of financial crisis and the effect of poverty on child nutrition, child work and women's time.

Major targets and policy papers such as the internationally agreed target to halve the numbers who live in extreme poverty by 2015 and the World Bank report *Growth is good for the Poor* fail to account for these social costs.

Just as the concept of globalisation has forced us towards an understanding of global interconnectedness and multiple complex relationships, so should we develop a more complex understanding of global poverty.

Rita Bhatia is a policy analyst for Save the Children UK. Caroline Harper is the head of research at Save the Children UK.

Photo: Dario Mitidieri / Save the Children

Photo: Roger Lemoyne / UNICEF

Girls and macroeconomics

Girls who are working constitute more than half of the 250 million children (from five to 14 years old) who are working. Nine out of 10 child domestics are girls, some as young as five years.

Girls who do not attend school account for more than half of the 130 million children currently not in class. It is estimated that 73 million girls are not receiving a school education. Three in 10 girls do not attend school compared to only one in 10 boys.

Most studies show that girls begin working at home at a younger age than their brothers, and that girls work on average seven hours more than boys. The vast majority of girls work at home work between four and 16 hours a day at home. Their work is invisible, isolated, unpaid and unrecognised.

NGOs working in rural areas have found that up to 75 per cent of agricultural work is undertaken by women and girls.

About 500,000 girls are engaged as sex workers in India. Around 4,500 girls from Nepal are trafficked to India each year and a similar number from Bangladesh are trafficked to Pakistan.

An estimated two million children around the world will be abused by adults through prostitution, trafficking and pornography. The majority of them will be girls.

Sources: Global March against Child Labour, UNICEF; International Confederation of Free Trade Unions; Atlas of South Asian Children and Women

Zafiris Tzannatos shares his personal views and explains that the problem of child labour is so complex only combined forces can tackle it.

Child labour is one of the most devastating consequences of persistent poverty.

Premature and extensive engagement in work prevents children from accumulating human capital and having higher earnings and higher welfare in later life. In many instances engaging child labour is the result of market failures and a coping mechanism for families when households cannot afford education for their children and cannot borrow for this purpose. Efforts to eliminate harmful child labour make good development and good economic sense.

It is generally agreed that child labour is the result of widespread poverty, which can be reduced and eliminated over time through high and persistent economic growth. However, the reverse is also true: child labour can be a significant *cause* of poverty if children are hurt by it. Children can be hurt *directly* or indirectly by child labour. They are hurt directly if they are hurt physically, emotionally, or socially; they can be hurt *indirectly* through lack of opportunity to education, which deprives children of their chance to be productive adults. Many children, for example, work under harsh conditions that preclude schooling altogether and are harmful to their physical and mental well-being and their social development.

Given the complex nature of child labour, solutions are needed to reach beyond conventional thinking and practices. Research has shown that in many countries, the incidence of child labour declines (as does the proportion of children in the total labour force), when (1) there are increases in the per capita GDP and/or (2) when there is increased availability of, and access to, education.

These findings are in line with the main approaches developed to combat child labour. These include the reduction of poverty, creation of opportunities to high quality basic education and reduction of the costs of education, provision of support services for working children, public awareness, legislation and regulation of child labour, and the elimination of the most harmful forms of child labour through the promotion of international measures. Of course these approaches are not mutually exclusive and should be adopted in various combinations in child labour reduction strategies.

The World Bank approach to helping to eliminate the worst forms of child labour recognises the leading role of our partners especially the United Nations Children's Fund (with the emphasis on children) and the International Labour Organisation (with the emphasis on labour). Along with them, other partners, governments, civil society and communities, the World Bank helps to make access to quality education as widespread as possible. It supports the poor in their efforts to increase their incomes, to afford their children's education, and to afford the opportunity cost of not working.

Child labour cannot be solved by any single effort or by any single organisation. The responsibility for reducing child labour falls on all of us.

Zafiris Tzannatos is leader at the World Bank Global Child Labour Program. For more information, refer to Peter Fallon and Zafiris Tzannatos *Child Labor: Issues and Directions for the World Bank*. World Bank, 1997.

Children paid a heavy price for the drive for growth in Asia, reports Jenina Joy Chavez-Malaluan.

There was a time not so long ago when the liberalisation of the financial system was praised as the pillar of Asian growth. But integration into global finance exposed the continent to much vulnerability and deepened some of its weaknesses. The 1997 crisis Asia hit children, the silent victims of the crisis, hard.

Throughout the 1980s Asian growth was driven by competition for limited public resources and export markets, and, through privatisation, liberalised trading regimes were promoted. A decade later, finance capital became the crucial factor of the economy. Between 1990 and 1995, South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines (as a group) posted an average GDP growth rate that was twice as high as the world average GDP growth rate. Accumulated capital in the developed world took advantage of substantial short-term price differentials.

Growth enabled these countries to drastically reduce poverty and improve certain income and social indicators. Suspicions about sustainability were swept aside. But then gaping current account deficits and non-performing loans that were mounting sent investors running. The result was a reversal in private capital flows, especially short-term ones. In 1997 the crisis countries of Asia experienced a 78 per cent drop in net private flows.

The reversal in private capital flows and steep currency devaluation produced huge losses that were accompanied by increased lending rates and decreases in consumption and investments. Governments were compelled to cut back on services. Households were forced to make painful adjustments. Impacts of the crisis in the Philippines were deepest in 1998. It exposed the government's weaknesses and inadequate response when it made indiscriminate budgetary cuts.

The interest rate hike caused business initiatives to stall, production to slow and unemployment to rocket. Since it is typical for Filipino families to remit part of their income to their extended family, those families relying on remittances from the capital Manila also experienced income loss.

Adjustments in household expenditures were made mostly on what households considered as 'non-essentials' like clothing, transportation, and even medical expenses. Basics like food were generally protected even as food budgets were cut. This meant use of lower quality foods and food substitutes. For households with pre-school children the cutback in expenditures was more alarming because of the type of items that were cut. More than one in four households with pre-school children reported having discontinued purchases of infant formula, while as many discontinued visits to health facilities or purchase of vitamin supplements in 1998.

The crisis had a strong impact on family relations and household stress that manifested itself in strained marital and parent-child relations. Drastic declines in incomes translated into less incentive for children to study, and more stress on female household members. There was significant correlation between reductions in child-specific expenditures (such as school allowance and spending on school-related activities) and reductions in children's interest in studies and their overall physical well being.

Some of the older children had to take on compensated and uncompensated work as a direct response to the crisis, when the mother had to attend to informal economic activities.

Vulnerabilities brought about by this type of economic situation create challenges for governments. Better internal regulatory mechanisms are needed, particularly for financial institutions, corporate indebtedness and short-term capital. Most importantly, there is great need to institutionalise appropriate safety nets regimes to protect the vulnerable.

When children are the victims of a crisis, this is not just because of what is done to them but also because of what is *not* being done for them. Economic growth is good, but broad-based low growth rather than very high growth will always be preferable.

Jenina Joy Chavez-Malaluan is with Focus on the Global South in the Philippines.

The figures may add up on paper, but El Salvador's narrowly focussed economic policies spell doom for the majority of its young, says Raúl Moreno.

Ten years ago El Salvador ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and also embarked on a structural adjustment programme (SAP).

The progress made in growth and stabilisation remains questionable, as are the SAP's effects on society's most vulnerable sectors. Although El Salvador's poverty has structural roots, there is compelling evidence that the programme has deepened the inequity and social inequality in the country.

The unequal distribution of income and assets within El Salvador's economy has had a direct impact on the development of many children. Structural adjustment simply added to that. Half of El Salvador's homes are poor, and 234,000 households cannot cover their basic food needs.

Most of the country's families experienced no improvement during the last decade. The emphasis was placed on beating inflation, rather than job creation and revitalising the economy. The result is a weakened social fabric with an unprecedented level of crime, increasing drug abuse and violence.

Monetary policy has kept up the real interest rate, affecting most economic sectors, especially housing, and there is an acute and growing lack where homes for the poor are concerned. Agriculture has faced a decade of negative policies, despite the long-standing importance of the sector in generating added value, jobs and foreign currency. Lack of investment has led to an ailing health system, further diminishing the chances of poor families to improve their living standards.

The numbers of people with regular access to social services remains very limited. If the privatisation of health services and water distribution goes ahead, it will strike another blow against the poor for whom access will become even more uncertain.

Fiscal stability is positive, but with low tax revenue, low and inefficient public spending and the regressive tax system, the system does not favour poor families, especially children and adolescents who are more dependent on public resources than adults. In contradiction of Article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children and adolescents do not figure as a priority in public resources allocations, nor are their needs reflected in state budgets or macro-economic policy design.

One of the pillars of the economic policy reform package is making the labour market flexible. This has produced a marked increase in precarious and fragmented employment, while the informal economy has expanded. To survive such uncertainty parents have resorted to sending their children to work.

The structural adjustment programmes have overlooked the consequences of imbalance in the labour market. Rising labour costs are dealt with by containing the minimum wage, set according to the cost of the basic food basket. This however does not cover the minimum calorie requirement to guarantee household survival.

It has been acknowledged that the same sectors of the population who have bourne the cost of economic policies have weathered the main impact of the structural adjustment ones. However beyond this acknowledgement no progress has been made save the view that social investment funds be used for charity and assistance. No comprehensive and systematic policy to deal with the major social problems exists.

The SAP's have merely involved social policy geared to specific aspects such as attention to vulnerable groups, the provision of basic services and the reduction of poverty. Social policies cannot continue to be used as instruments to offset the effects of adjustment. The best social policy is a good economic policy, and the Convention's belief in "the best interest of the child" is also the best interest of the country's future.

Until these factors are addressed, children will be forced to engage in a struggle for survival along with other members their families. With little hope of a change in their situation, the outlook is bleak indeed.

Raúl Moreno is director of macroeconomics and development at the El Salvador National Development Foundation (FUNDE) and chair of the School of Economics at El Salvador University. This article is a summary of a research study conducted by José Ángel Tolentino, María Alicia Ordóñez, Stefan de Vylder and Raúl Moreno.

A clear case for relief

The debt relief process is bogged down in red tape, but there is a way of freeing governments and ensuring the benefits go to those who need it most now. Tony Burdon explains.

"What more qualification is there for debt relief when children are dying? Must we ignore the howling of our children to pay debt?" Julius Nyerere, Butiama, April 1998.

Last year the G7 promised $100 billion in debt relief and promised 25 countries that relief would start this year, but despite these promises progress has been appallingly slow. By August only nine out of 36 countries, which are eligible for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative, had started to receive a trickle of relief. In the meantime government revenue in these indebted countries has been diverted from essential investments in health and education to repayments to foreign creditors, and excessive debt stocks have deterred investors.

And so, in spite of the fanfare, the debt crisis continues unabated as it has done for two decades, undermining poverty reduction and human development, and making international development goals unattainable for many countries. For example, Tanzania entered the HIPC framework early this year but will continue to pay twice as much on debt as on primary education, thereby leaving two million children in Tanzania out of school.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child commits states to a range of obligations to child health, education, and the survival and development of the child. Under Article 4 of the Convention, states agreed to "…undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources, and where needed, within the framework of international co-operation." While some progress has been made, the majority of creditor governments and their institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have failed to meet their obligations.

About half of the debt owed by 52 of the poorest countries, which are in urgent need of debt cancellation, is owed directly to individual governments-mainly in the G7, namely Japan, the US, Britain, Canada, France, Germany and Italy. Most of the rest is multilateral debt, owed to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, organisations effectively run by the G7 governments.

Children bear the highest cost of the debt tragedy for they are most vulnerable to the effects of debilitated health services in indebted countries. In the education sector, lack of investment consigns children, particularly girls, to lives trapped by poverty.

HIPC countries suffer some of the worst levels of deprivation in the developing world. Here about 3.4 million children (almost 20 per cent) will die before they turn five. Life expectancy is 51 years, which is 26 years less than life expectancy in the industrialised countries. Around 47 million children are not in school, and these numbers are growing, rather than declining. Based on current trends, by 2015 HIPC countries will not meet the international development goal to reduce child mortality by two thirds. In fact the gap between trend and target represents two million *additional* child deaths.

The picture is similarly bleak in education. Oxfam estimates that, based on current trends, by 2015 over 75 million children will remain out of school; and the majority of these children will be in HIPC countries.

The new debt relief framework, HIPC2, agreed to in June 1999, links debt relief to the development of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. These try to involve civil society in the process of debt cancellation. At the same time, agreements reached by the IMF and World Bank have re-defined their roles in HIPC countries. In future their programmes are supposed to support nationally developed strategies, placing poverty reduction at the centre of IMF and World Bank programming. However, the debt relief process has now become bogged down in bureaucratic processes and strapped by wide-ranging conditions, furthermore there has been little change in IMF and World Bank practice. Debt relief for Honduras, for instance, was delayed due to negotiations over electricity privatisation. HIPC is not delivering on its promise to provide deeper and faster debt relief.

That is why Oxfam has proposed that HIPC and other countries that are poor and indebted, such as Nigeria and Haiti, should enter HIPC immediately if they meet one critical condition: that is they commit to placing debt relief finance into a transparently-managed Poverty Fund. Interim poverty reduction strategies must direct expenditure towards areas that reduce poverty, such as education, health, rural roads, and employment generation programmes. While these countries must take the initiative to undertake long-term reforms to seriously reduce poverty, it must be recognised that these countries face major poverty reduction challenges, which shouldn't have to wait for debt relief. This is a mechanism that could provide relief now.

Tony Burdon is policy advisor at Oxfam.

The debt we owe our children

A brighter future for them depends on basic social services and debt relief, says Jan Vandemoortele.

At the World Summit for Children in 1990, the promise was made that all children would be enrolled in primary school by the year 2000. Today however, it is estimated that more than 110 million remain out of school. And so it is a sorry distinction of today's world that at the dawn of the Information Age about one in three children fails to complete five years of education-the minimum for basic literacy.

Moreover, key social indicators suggest the pace of progress slowed down in the past decade when compared to the 1970s and 1980s. Progress continued during the 1990s but has not kept pace with promises made. The average under-five mortality rate in developing countries was to be reduced by 50 per cent by 2000, but preliminary data show that the average rate declined by a mere five per cent over the 1990s. Child malnutrition was to be halved between 1990 and 2000, but preliminary estimates indicate a reduction by only one-sixth.

Why have the promises not been fulfilled? Why are two out of every five children in developing countries living in poverty and struggling to survive on less than $1 per day when the global economy is experiencing unprecedented prosperity?

The simple answer is because virtually all countries under-invest in children. Governments in developing countries spend less than 15 per cent of their national budgets on basic social services. Rich countries spend about 10 per cent of their aid budgets on basic education and basic health combined. This is much less than what is needed. The 20/20 initiative called on poor countries to allocate 20 per cent of their national budgets to basic social services, and called on rich countries to direct 20 per cent of their aid budget to the same services. Today, spending on basic social services by both poor and rich countries is falling short (by about $100 billion per year) of what is needed to achieve the 20/20 shares. This only represents about one third of one per cent of global annual income and means that if the world were to invest an extra 30 cents out of every $100, all children could be healthy, well-nourished and in primary school.

If achieving the goals of the 20/20 initiative and delivering basic social services takes so little money, then why has it not happened? The answer to this is more complex. Developing countries under-invest in basic social services because of the debt burden. About two-thirds of developing countries spend more on debt servicing than on basic social services; and some countries spend three to five times more on debt. Often debt servicing absorbs between one-third and one-half of the national budget. This makes the objective of macro-economic stability hard to achieve, if not impossible.

To spend more on external debt than on basic social services, when tens of millions of children lack access to basic education, primary health, adequate food and safe drinking water, is not only morally wrong, it is also poor economics.

There are attempts to cancel the debt of poor countries, but progress is too slow. The Jubilee 2000 campaigners basically have it right: debt is a millstone around the neck of the poorest countries that has to be removed. The time for debt relief is not today, it was *yesterday.* For millions of children, tomorrow will be too late. We must support the Jubilee 2000 campaign of non-governmental organisations that call for the immediate cancellation and forgiveness of debt of the poorest countries, and seek to ensure that the money is spent on genuine poverty reduction and also redirected to basic social services.

The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, which is sponsored by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, remains the best hope for solving the debt crisis. Yet its implementation has been painfully slow with only Bolivia, Guyana, Mozambique and Uganda receiving debt relief in the first three years of operations. Under the *enhanced* HIPC initiative launched in 1999, participating countries will be expected to give priority to poverty reduction. But again there are issues with this enhanced initiative as developing countries have been asked to invest time and efforts in processes and documents that may not result in tangible benefits. Preparing a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper absorbs scarce capacities and resources. Such documentary requirements can easily postpone practical solutions to the debt problem and could result in unacceptably high opportunity costs for the poor.

Spending on health and education often by-passes the poor. This happens when the advantages of public spending are incorrectly targeted and end up going to those who are better-off rather than to those who are poor and need it most.

The most effective and cost-efficient way to reduce poverty is to ensure universal access to basic social services. These services can make an enormous difference beyond their own sphere of operation. Debt relief is also a key part of the solution, albeit that by itself it will not be sufficient to eradicate human poverty.

Some commentators suggest that there are many reasons for delaying debt relief but we have only to look at the example of Nelson Mandela for inspiration to the contrary. When he was freed from prison, he realised that he had to look to the future and forgive the past in order to move South Africa forward and overcome the legacy of apartheid. Unfortunately at present the international community is unwilling to do likewise and remove the yoke that shackles poor countries by relieving the legacy of bad loans.

Jan Vandemoortele is chief policy analyst at UNICEF in New York

Children and poverty

The causes of poverty include conflict, natural disasters, population growth, poor governance, limited employment opportunities or access to land, failed economic strategies and social inequality brought about by disability, ethnicity or age. Children are as much, if not more, affected than adults. How we understand both the nature and causes of poverty is fundamental to our ability to find solutions.

Here are some key indicators on children and poverty
• In many of the world's poorest counties, children under the age of 15 make up over 40 per cent of the population. The highest proportions are Palestine (52 per cent), Uganda (50 per cent), Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger, Somalia and Yemen (each at 48 per cent), and Burundi (47 per cent). The UK is 19 per cent, the US 21 per cent, Italy 14 per cent. [Source: UN Statistics Division, 1999]
• The situation of UK children has steadily deteriorated. In 1997/98 one in three children (about 4.4 million) lived in households with below half the average income, compared with one in 10 in 1989. [Source: Child Poverty Action Group, 2000]
• The International Labour Organisation estimates 120 million children between the ages of five and 14 years work full time, and a further 130 million part time. [Source: "Statistics on working children and hazardous child labour brief", ILO, 1998]
• The under-five child mortality rate in sub-Saharan Africa is 173 deaths per 1000 live births. In industrialised countries the rate is 6 deaths per 1000 live births. [Source: "State of the World's Children", UNICEF, 2000]
• In developing countries more than 130 million children out of a total of 625 million of primary school age are growing-up without access to basic education. [Source: "State of the World's Children", UNICEF, 1999]

Poverty indicators
Low income is still the most common way of measuring poverty. Almost every country sets its own poverty line, usually with reference to international lines and measurement conventions. Income poverty is measured in two ways-as absolute or relative poverty. Relative poverty is measured as households living on or below half of the national average disposable income. International absolute poverty lines are set, for people living in the South as less than US$1 or US$2 per day. For middle income countries it is less than US$4 per day.

International aid - what's in it for children?

Would young people fair better if development projects were tested at the outset to see exactly what their impact is on children? Sheridan Bartlett thinks so.

For the past decade, the international community has pledged itself to helping the world's poor children.

The broad acceptance that children have rights and the fact that children's well-being is a telling indicator of social health have been in large part responsible for this stand. But donor funding priorities and strategies suggest that grand declarations of this kind are often more rhetoric than a commitment to focused action.

But let's look at the aid situation and the chances of the international community delivering what it has promised. How much of aid goes to the basic needs that are fundamental in securing children's rights? And are children's priorities really taken into account in the support given to these basic needs?

Over the last decade there has been a dramatic decline in official assistance to low income countries. Loans and grants from multilateral agencies rose over this period, but were more than offset by the decline in bilateral assistance. Between 1990 and 1997, as GNP grew by almost $8,000 per person in donor countries, aid dropped by $18 per person, and overall assistance to low income countries fell from US$32 billion to US $25 billion.

Since 1997 the rate of this decline has eased off. However increases in aid are largely related to rescue packages in response to the Asian financial crisis, often at the expense of routine programmes for poverty reduction.

Overall bilateral assistance remains at about 33 per cent of the amount supposedly targeted by donor countries, in 1998 it reached not quite one quarter of per cent of GNP, a pitiful fraction of the amount spent each year on defence. In spite of general prosperity, disparities and poverty increase, with children affected disproportionately compared to other age groups.

Basic human needs have never been a high priority for development assistance. Support for the interventions essential to children's survival and development such as improved housing, water and sanitation, nutrition, primary health care and basic education represent a small percentage of overall aid.

There is increasing recognition that economic growth alone cannot eradicate poverty, and recently there has been greater commitment in the development assistance world to targeting poverty more directly. The 20/20 initiative, proposed at the 1995 Social Summit, sets as a goal that 20 per cent of both donor assistance and developing country budgets be allocated to basic needs. Similarly the S21C (Shaping the 21st Century) strategy proposes a number of poverty eradication targets for the year 2015.

But changing understandings and commitments have not resulted in altered allocations across the board. Some multilateral agencies, notably the World Bank and the Inter American Development Bank, have shifted priorities towards basic needs and away from more conventional economic infrastructure projects. But among donor countries the funds committed to basic social services remain limited.

Figures for 1998, reported by the Reality of Aid Project, show 6.6 per cent of combined bilateral development assistance funds going to water supply and sanitation. From the 17 countries that reported these figures, only 1.44 per cent and 1.72 per cent were earmarked for basic education and primary health respectively. Only three countries' aid programmes were reported to have met their fair share of the targeted aid to basic needs in 1997.

The situation is further complicated by the overwhelming debt repayment schedules many countries face. These burdens continue to undermine the states' capacity to fund basic services, while projected debt relief plans proceed at a snail's pace.

Even when aid is allocated to the areas that most profoundly affect children, there is no guarantee that projects will actually reflect the priorities of children and those who care for them. Attention to the needs of a community at large does not always trickle down so that children benefit, anymore than economic prosperity automatically improves the situation of the poor.

Standards for adequate water provision, for instance, often fail to take into account the sheer volume of water needed within a household to ensure the health of young children, or the burden of hauling that water from a distant standpipe. Sanitation solutions rarely reflect the difficulty for very young children of waiting in line, or their fear of overly large pit openings. Projects to upgrade existing community space seldom pay attention to child safety. Schools are often built without an understanding of local resistance to girls going any distance from home. Attention to basic needs is not enough if it fails to recognise the realities of half the population.

Gender-aware development has called for women's concerns to be considered in every aspect of decision-making. Simply tacking on extra programmes for women is not enough. If international commitments to children are to be more than empty promises, the same principles must apply in their case. Not only should greater weight be given to interventions that benefit children, but every stage of policy, planning and programming must be based on a realistic understanding of how poor children and their carers live their lives and what day-to-day difficulties they encounter. That means listening to what they have to say and taking on board their opinions. Only then will the commitments from the international community truly bear fruit.

Sheridan Bartlett is research associate with the Children's Environments Research Group, City University in New York.

When children are the losers

Macroeconomic reforms can have a devastating impact on children's lives. Here Pham Thi Lan examines what young people in Vietnam are up against since the government adopted such policies.

The major macroeconomic reforms that Vietnam undertook from 1989 onwards have dramatically altered the prospects of children.

On the external front, the government liberalised trade laws and harmonised exchange rates and legal reforms in a bid to attract foreign investment. Domestically it also introduced sweeping reforms. It dismantled price restrictions on goods and services, freed the banking system from much of its bureaucratic red tape, implemented positive interest rates, cut back surpluses in state-owned enterprises, reduced state subsidies and the state budget deficit.

The result was rapid economic growth, as GDP increased 5.1 per cent in 1990 and 8.1 per cent in 1997. But these are just the figures. The reality is that growth has been extremely unbalanced. It has been capital-intensive rather than labour-intensive and urban expansion has won over rural development.

Such radical changes have had four major consequences for children.

The economic reforms have, in the main, not considered access to basic services, despite the crucial role these play in creating a successful and equitable transition to a market economy. Numerous analyses indicate that budget spending has been greater on higher education, a move that tends to benefit the better off. More funds have also been devoted to hospitals and not commune health centres-preferred by the poor because they are easier to get to. Consequently, children from poor households are unlikely to benefit from the basic social services.

Market liberalisation has led to an increase in child labour. As children have more chance to earn money, so greater numbers of them are dropping out of school or even failing to enrol in the first place in rural areas. And wherever they are, children who labour are exposed to greater risks of abuse and exploitation.

Social sector reforms have removed traditional safety nets and introduced user fees for basis social services increasing the financial burden on poor households. High hospital charges have created an additional obstacle for children from poor families receiving proper treatment. Ethnic minority areas, where poverty is greater than the national average, are particularly affected.

Privatisation policies have lead to the closure of most pre-schools run by cooperatives, with older children now devoting more time to looking after their siblings. Further knock-on effects have meant standards in childcare are dropping and child malnutrition increasing.

Pham Thi Lan is senior project officer, children and economics with Save the Children UK's Vietnam Programme

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Please photocopy and return to CRIN

CRIN

CHILD RIGHTS INFORMATION NETWORK

Membership form

Name of organisation

Acronym/abbreviation | Year established

English translation of name of organisation

Name of director

Name of main CRIN contact in your organisation

Postal address (include country)

Tel (include country codes) | Fax (include country codes)

Email | Website

Number of staff

Languages used

Does your organisation have capacity to receive email regularly?

Does your organisation have capacity to visit websites regularly?

Number of CRIN Newsletters required in English, French and/or Spanish

Please give a short description of your organisation's aims and activities
(please continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

List countries in which your organisation works
(please continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

Please tick the appropriate box

How do you describe your organisation?

- [ ] Non governmental organisation (NGO)
- [ ] United Nations agency
- [ ] Community based organisation
- [ ] Research institute
- [ ] International organisation
- [ ] Governmental organisation

Does your organisation?

- [ ] Work directly with children
- [ ] Lobby governments and the United Nations
- [ ] Work in partnership with other organisations
- [ ] Provide training on children's rights
- [ ] Provide funding to other organisations
- [ ] Undertake research on children's rights
- [ ] Work with the media and press
- [ ] Undertake legal casework on behalf of children

Which age group does your organisation target?

- [ ] Children 0-4
- [ ] Children 5-15
- [ ] Children 16-18

Does your organisation have expertise in any of the following themes?

- [ ] Children in care, fostering and adoption
- [ ] Children living with HIV/AIDS
- [ ] Child labour and working children
- [ ] Individual cases of violations
- [ ] Children in armed conflict
- [ ] Children in conflict with the law
- [ ] Reporting and monitoring on the CRC
- [ ] Children and the media
- [ ] Children with disabilities
- [ ] Participation of children in decision making
- [ ] Children and education
- [ ] Refugee and unaccompanied children
- [ ] Environment and habitat
- [ ] Sexual exploitation of children
- [ ] Children and health
- [ ] Children working and living on the street

Signature | Date

Please return this completed form along with any relevant publications, newsletters, annual reports and brochures to:

Child Rights Information Network, c/o Save the Children, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD, UK

Tel +44.(0)20.7716.2400 Fax +44.(0)20.7793.7628 Email info@crin.org

Joining CRIN is free. CRIN's membership policy requires that you (1) work for an organisation that supports the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, (2) are involved in child rights activities, (3) are committed to sharing information. CRIN is an open network of members and therefore holds no official status beyond that of its member organisations. CRIN is unable to accredit any member organisation or provide funding for its members,unless funding is directly related to one of CRIN's projects approved by CRIN's management team.

November 2 to 3, 2000
Spend, Spend, Spend? Children, Young People and Money
Hilton Dunblane Hydro, Scotland
Leanne Mabberley, Children in Scotland, Princes House, 5 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh, EH2 4RG.
T +44.(0)131.222.2410
E lmabberley@childreninscotland.org.uk

November 2 to 4, 2000
International Conference on the Humanization of Childbirth
Fortaleza - Ceará, Brazil
Eventuall Promoções & Assessoria, Rua Dr. Gilberto Studart, 369 - Papicu - 60190-750, Fortaleza-CE-Brazil
T +55.85.265.4022 F+55.85.265.4009
E childbirth@eventuall.com.br
http://www.humanization.org

November 10 to 11, 2000
Children, Social Exclusion and Citizenship: Policy and Practice for Children who are Socially Excluded in Denmark and the UK
Sue Cottam, University of Sunderland, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Priestman Building, Green Terrace, Sunderland, SR1 3PZ, UK
T +44.191.515.3621 F +44.191.515.2229
E susan.cottam@sunderland.ac.uk

November 14 to 17, 2000
Future Perspectives of Young Women and Girls who Live on the Streets
Berlin, Germany
Dr Dolly Conto Obregon, Director, Internationales Strassenkinder Archiv, Weinbergsweg 23, 10119 Berlin, Germany
T +49.30.44.02.46.56
E conto@strassekinder-archive.de

November 19, 2000
World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse
Elly Pradervand - Founding Director, Women's World Summit Foundation / Fondation Sommet Mondial des Femmes, P.O. Box 2001, 1211 Geneva 1, Switzerland
T +41.22.738.6619 F +41.22.738.8248
E wwsf@iprolink.ch
http:/www.woman.ch

November 27 to 29, 2000
Children at the Dawn of a New Millenium
Nicosia, Cyprus
Maisoun JABALI, Directorate General III, Social Cohesion, Programme for Children, Council of Europe, F-67076 Strasbourg Cedex, France
T +33.3.90.21.47.98 F +33.3.88.41.37.65
E maisoun.jabali@coe.int
http://www.coe.int

November 30 to December 2, 2000
Youth Care - Youth Punishment
Luxembourg
Internationale Gesellschaft fuer erzieherische Hilfen (FICE-Germany), Schaumainkai 101-103, D-60596, Frankfurt am Main, Germany
T +49.69.63398611 F +49.69.63398625
E tagungen@igfh.de

December 5 to 6, 2000
Conference 2000: Findings on Reproductive Health of Refugees and Displaced Populations
Washington D.C., USA
Sara Casey, E sec42@columbia.edu
http://www.rhrc.org

December 7 to 9, 2000
First World Symposium on Reading and Writing and the International Conference on Early Childhood Education "Early Childhood in the Third Millenium"
Valencia, Spain
World Association of Early Childhood Educators, Averroes 3, Colonia del Retiro, 28007 Madrid, Spain
T +34.91.501.87.54 F +34.91.501.87.46
E info@waece.com
http://www.waece.com

December 8 to 15, 2000
The International Interdisciplinary Course on Children's Rights
Ghent, Belgium
The Children's Rights Centre, University of Ghent, Henri Dunantlaan 2 - B-9000 Gent, Belgium
T +32.9.264.6281 F +32.9.264.6493
E Kathleen.Vlieghe@rug.ac.be
http://www.allserv.rug.ac.be/~fspiessc/

January 8 to 26, 2001
26th Session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
Geneva, Switzerland
State party reports being considered: Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Latvia, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Palau and Saudi Arabia
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Palais Des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
T +41.22.917.9301 F +41.22.917.9022
E pdavid.hchr@unog.ch
http://www.unhchr.ch

January 29 to February 2, 2001
Pre-Sessional Working Group to the 27th Session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
Geneva, Switzerland
NGO reports to be considered: Bhutan, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Guatemala, Monaco, Oman, Turkey, United Republic of Tanzania
NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, c/o DCI, PO Box 88, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland
T +41.22.734.0558 F +41.22.740.1145
E dci-ngo.group@pingnet.ch

January 29 to February 2, 2001
Second Substantive Preparatory Committee for the UN Special Session on Children
New York, USA
For non-governmental issues (NGO issues), contact the NGO Participation Team, UNICEF House H-8A, 3 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017, USA
F +1.212.824.6466 or +1.212.824.6486
For intergovernmental issues, contact Secretariat for the Special Session on Children UNICEF House, 3 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017, USA

Spring 2001
Children, Economics and the EU - Towards Child Friendly Policies
Kalle Elofsson, Save the Children Europe Group,
c/o Radda Barnen, Torsgatan 4, S-107 88
Stockholm, Sweden
T +46.8.698.9000 F +46.8.698.9010
E kalle.elofsson@rb.se

March 11 to 15, 2001
Third World Summit on Media for Children
European Children's Television Centre, 20 Analipseos
Street, Athens 152 35, Greece
T +301.68.51.258 F +301.68.17.987
E ectc@otenet.gr
http://www.childrens-media.org

June 11 to 15, 2001
Third Substantive Preparatory Committee for the UN Special Session on Children
New York, USA
For contact details, see Second Substantive Preparatory
Committee above