

Chapter 21

Case Study Theme 1: Youth and Poverty Alleviation – India and South Africa

Box 21.1 SDG 1 No Poverty

Targets: All targets

SDG 10: Reduce inequality

Target: 10.2 includes social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age

Main sector: Poverty alleviation

Issue: Reducing youth poverty

Strategy: Youth and child poverty analysis, India, South Africa, United Kingdom

21.1 Introduction

This case study looks at how a youth analysis of poverty factors can help mainstream youth in poverty analysis and support evidence-based, youth-focused programmes and projects. It is framed by how a youth focus can be integrated into national targets to reach SDG 1 – No Poverty.

21.2 Youth and poverty

Combating poverty requires the elimination of poverty for all groups. Poverty dimensions for young people can be starkly different as entrants into employment, those straddling both education and employment, and those grappling with issues of entry into housing markets, access to credit, starting a family and so on.

To introduce a youth angle to the poverty goal, policy-makers in the youth sector and other sectors related to poverty alleviation must:

1. bring evidence to the table of the reality of youth poverty and its causes, markers and impacts;
2. be constantly vigilant about emerging legislation, policy and programming, and be able to assess their impact on youth poverty; and
3. ensure that the youth sector, young people and youth experts participate in the drafting of all new poverty alleviation programmes to ensure that young people's concerns are integrated in national poverty alleviation frameworks.

21.3 What helps us understand and assess youth poverty?

The analysis and case studies below are primarily focused on point (1) above, bringing evidence to the table on youth poverty. There is clear evidence from countries where systemic poverty studies have been conducted that young people are vulnerable to poverty due to the 'age-based discrimination and the uncertainties and dynamism surrounding the transition from childhood to adulthood'.¹ This of course comes with the caveat that youth are not always disproportionately poor, and that it is a combination of factors that leads to youth poverty.

In this case study, we bring together examples of analysis and implementation relating to research on youth poverty derived from the Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC) of the University of Manchester² and its observations on analysing youth poverty and the implications of these findings on programming drawn from two countries: India and South Africa.

The CPRC proposes that, to assess youth poverty, specific concepts such as chronic poverty, life-course poverty and intergenerational poverty need to be understood, studied and integrated into policy-making frameworks. That is:

- An analysis of chronic poverty helps locate the relative position of different groups of the poor and facilitate policy prioritisation.
- Life-course events (leaving school, starting work, giving birth and raising children) play a significant role in shaping youth poverty. These events, though not always related to the stage of youth, are typically related to youth.

- An intergenerational perspective to poverty is also important, because youth poverty is often linked to parental poverty and childhood deprivation and can have implications for the rest of the young person's later life as an adult and senior citizen.

The CPRC also establishes, as do other development organisations such as the UK's Overseas Development Institute (ODI), that, even though youth may not always be the poorest or most vulnerable group, it is nevertheless the adolescent or young adulthood period where anti-poverty interventions have the most potential for long-term positive change and for ending cyclical poverty; poverty in one age cohort increases the likelihood of poverty in the next, so youth is one of the earlier stages at which poverty can be alleviated.

Intra-household to global factors affect chronic poverty. Some maintain poverty, such as the drawing back of social protection programmes, while others mitigate poverty, such as enhanced youth and stakeholder participation in creating poverty alleviation programmes, or the design of needs- and rights-based social protection programmes. What mitigates or maintains poverty in your context? What reinforces youth poverty systemically, and keeps poor people poor and poor youth poor?

Of course, gender politics, economic policy contexts, inheritance and other laws, attitudes towards youth etc. all influence these trends. Alleviating youth poverty, as observed above, is also linked to state provision of public services and social protection, programmes that support asset generation and retention,³ and campaigns and legal action to prevent discrimination against age cohorts. Box 21.2 highlights an example of a campaign that creates solidarity between young people and adults.

The poverty research of the CPRC also highlights the need to 'take empowerment seriously' and the need to take a system-wide approach to youth poverty alleviation:

Policy must move beyond the cosy rhetoric of participatory approaches, decentralisation and theories about rights. It needs to address the difficult political process of challenging the layers of discrimination that keep people trapped in poverty. For many youth, age-based discrimination adds to the discrimination they face due to gender, ethnicity and

Box 21.2 Reducing intergenerational poverty and pensions

In the United Kingdom, the Work and Pensions Select Committee's inquiry into *Intergenerational Fairness* has been identified by the UK's Intergenerational Foundation (IF) as 'a pioneering exploration of how arguments about intergenerational fairness should be factored into contemporary welfare policy'. This is an example of how a state committee has undertaken the analysis of a non-youth-related policy and its impact on young people.

As the IF observes on the committee's report:

[The Work and Pensions Select Committee] came down heavily in favour of the view that young people are receiving a raw deal compared to older generations in modern Britain. The report characterises intergenerational unfairness as a problem of the British economy having become 'skewed towards baby boomers and against millennials'. The committee fully accepted the argument that today's young people face great difficulty in building up asset wealth because of rising house prices and changes to the pension system, while at the same time their taxes are being used to support the most successful members of the baby-boomer generation who have accumulated more wealth than they will ever be able to.

The [committee's chair], MP Frank Field, explained the problem using the concept of the intergenerational social contract, which IF emphasised in [its] submission to the inquiry:

'The welfare state is underpinned by an implicit intergenerational contract. Each generation is supported in retirement by their in-work successors. This is supported by all age groups, but a combination of factors has sent the balance out of kilter. It is now the working young and their children who face the daunting challenge of getting on in an economy skewed against them.'

From the Intergenerational Foundation website⁴

even poverty itself. But children and young people are able to be effective change agents within their communities. There is an urgent need to enhancing their capacity to influence institutions that affect their lives, through removing the political, legal and social barriers that work against them and other poor and chronically poor people.⁵

Some examples of projects where youth poverty analysis has been implemented are:

- **Young Lives, India (also Ethiopia, Peru and Vietnam):** This investigation of change in child poverty over 15 years can be easily adapted for youth poverty analysis programmes.⁶
- **Birth-to-Twenty, South Africa:** Initiated in 1990, this study explores the social, economic, political, demographic and nutrition transitions under way

in urban South Africa and the impact on a cohort of children, adolescents and their families.⁷

- **The British Household Panel Survey:** This survey analysed life-course effects on income using ten waves of study. Here, the authors looked at how income was affected, through time, for specific age groups such as youth, adults and the elderly. This enabled the researchers to identify income dynamics in people's lives across the life cycle.

The two programmes from India and South Africa are highlighted in Boxes 21.3 and 21.4, respectively.

Box 21.3 Young Lives, former United Andhra Pradesh, India

Young Lives India, conducted in Andhra Pradesh, with 7 per cent of India's 1.2 billion population, was an attempt to understand the relationship between child and youth poverty through the study of the same cohort of children and youth across a period of 15 years.

Andhra Pradesh was one of the first Indian states to initiate the reform process for fiscal and institutional restructuring at the state level and was the model for several new poverty reduction initiatives during the 1990s. It is particularly interesting to see the shifts and changes in child and youth poverty where such initiatives have taken place. These types of longitudinal data on children and youth also help assess the impact of policies and programmes for them, and inform the formulation of new ones.

Four rounds of data collection were conducted for a group of 2,000 children, who were aged between 6 and 18 months at the beginning of the project, and 1,000 children between the ages of 7.5 and 8.5, with the first round conducted in 2002. The final round of data was collected between 2013 and 2014, with the same children then aged 11–12 in the younger cohort and 18–19 in the older cohort. Data were collected from communities with different economic status, but with oversampling for poor families spread across representative geographical units of Andhra Pradesh.

The study comprised a large-scale household survey of all the children and their primary caregivers, and qualitative data through focus groups and dialogue with sub-samples. Data included information about their material and social circumstances, their perception on their lives and their aspirations for the future, set against their environmental and social realities. This has become a unique, cross-country longitudinal dataset exploring the causes and consequences of child and youth poverty.

Data collected for the child and young adult groups were invariably different, with youth data including parent and caregiver updates, mobility, subjective wellbeing, education, employment, earnings, and time use. Data on feelings and attitudes, household decision-making, marital and living arrangements, fertility, body measurements (anthropometry), health and nutrition and cognitive tests⁸ were also noted.

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Box 21.3 Young Lives, former United Andhra Pradesh, India (cont.)

This kind of data enables the assessment of poverty and capability factors for young adults in relation to what their status was as children and helps study the relationship between child and youth poverty, and shifts in status across time given various factors.

The Young Lives report for round 4 for Andhra Pradesh reported on outcomes for the older cohort at age 19 in terms of education, employment and marriage, showing clearly how young people's opportunities in life are influenced by household wealth level, background circumstances and intergenerational factors assessed through earlier cohort data for the same group.

Half of the young people were still in education (15 per cent combining this with work), 26 per cent had left school and were working, 9 per cent were married and not working (mainly young women), and 7 per cent were not studying, working or married. Almost a third of the sample children had started university-level education, although children from economically and socially disadvantaged groups were more likely to have left full-time education, many without a secondary-level qualification. By the age of 19, 36 per cent of the girls in the sample, and 2 per cent of the boys, were married – and 107 of these already had a child of their own (almost two-thirds of the married girls already had children). Early marriage and child-bearing were most common for girls in rural areas, from poor households, or who had only completed primary education.⁹

The findings are an indication that greater focus should be paid to young people from poorer communities in ensuring access to affordable secondary and tertiary education for those who aspire to higher education, and that a specific focus on young women's poverty needs to address specific gender-related issues in education and the prevention of early marriage and unwanted pregnancy, which are directly related to poverty alleviation and autonomy for young women.

Source: Young Lives 2014b

Box 21.4 Mandela's Children – Birth-to-Twenty study, South Africa

Growing out of the desire to understand the new realities of South Africa's children following the sociopolitical change that came post-Apartheid, *Birth-to-Twenty* (BT20), initially known as Birth-to-Ten, followed a group of urban children, among the first to be born into a democratic South Africa, for 20 years. Led by the University of Witwatersrand and the South African Medical Research Council, the BT20 study took a lifecycle approach and focused studies on issues that were relevant to the specific development phase of the cohort at that given time – i.e. focusing on things such as cognitive and physical development during the younger years, and sexual behaviour and social marginalisation in the teen and later years.

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Box 21.4 Mandela's Children – Birth-to-Twenty study, South Africa (Cont.)

The approach to the study was multidisciplinary, with a variety of researchers and scientists accessing the group or particular subgroups within the cohort for discipline-specific data. One potential opportunity for such a study is to have a more heterogeneous cohort of participants, so that a systematic comparison between subgroups among youth can be made – in this case, between black, Afrikaans and other racial groups in South Africa. This may facilitate disaggregation of data for young people from different backgrounds and assessing the relationship between marginality and growth/attainment factors. This in turn would provide more evidence on inequalities that may exist within subgroups and later inform intervention programmes or policies that address the real issues.

Such studies require a committed group of people dedicated to 'operations, administration, lab and data ... [and systems which allow] reporting to investigators weekly, sophisticated bar code, filing, and electronic systems have been designed to print address lists, weekly appointments, tracking participants through the study components, data completeness and quality, entry, cleaning and the construction of analytical datasets'.¹⁰

However, the gains of investing in such youth-focused research can lead to more impactful and relevant interventions in various sectors and can be a source to inform major policy-level decisions where there is a paucity of other current data.¹¹

These initiatives can be discussed to analyse youth poverty in member countries where sectors demonstrate an interest in mainstreaming youth poverty dynamics into their poverty alleviation programmes.

21.4 Implications: what enablers/disablers influenced the process?

Considering the Youth Mainstreaming Enablers Framework in Chapter 4, the societal, structural, organisational and impact factors laid out in Table 21.1 help us understand successes and challenges of youth poverty analysis.

1. Questions for member countries contemplating youth poverty studies may include:
 - Research capacity: Are there any existing studies on youth poverty? Are member countries equipped to do life-course analysis and gather longitudinal data

Table 21.1 Youth and poverty case studies: Analysis of enablers and disablers

Enablers/disablers	Elaboration
Societal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of variant poverty drivers for young people
Structural – macro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional collaboration between universities, medical research bodies, structures etc. in place for multidisciplinary research (connected governance)
Structural – meso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial commitments to long-term research and valuing of evidence-based planning
Organisational – structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational capacity for long-term cross-sectoral collaboration, knowledge of child and youth development factors in medical and other research bodies, skills and capacities for longitudinal studies
Organisational – process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child and youth-focused research in broader poverty studies
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater understanding of poverty drivers and mitigators from childhood to young adulthood to inform policy

with the participation of young people? Does the expertise exist? Do resources exist?

- Policy directives: If not, what policy directives will support the institutionalisation of such research and analysis to ensure that a youth lens is incorporated into poverty analysis?
 - Attitudes: Do the right attitudes and sufficient capacity building exist to ensure youth participation and youth analysis in poverty alleviation programmes, including analysing development outcomes for specific economic/social groups of youth?
 - A visionary approach: Do we consciously build the SDGs vision into national poverty alleviation programmes, with equity at the centre?
- b. Implications for the youth sector:
- Lobby with ministries/departments of poverty alleviation/economic empowerment to focus on youth poverty.
 - Encourage youth-led research on youth poverty.

21.5 Conclusion

This chapter looked at the importance of systemic youth poverty analysis to understand the drivers and detractors of poverty, in order to adjust/formulate policies, programmes and projects informed by the findings. It demonstrates the requirement for investment in robust research on youth poverty, and the benefits this will have in terms of informed and effective poverty alleviation programmes for young people.

Notes

- 1 Moore 2005.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid., 22.
- 4 Intergenerational Foundation 2016.
- 5 Moore 2005, 23.
- 6 See Young Lives website: www.younglives.org.uk.
- 7 See Richter et al. 2007.
- 8 Young Lives 2014a.
- 9 Young Lives 2014b.
- 10 Richter et al. 2007.
- 11 Ibid.

References

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