

Shifting the debate on poverty reduction

The story of ODI's work on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is the story of a high-level partnership that is moving a crucial debate forward. As the 2015 MDGs deadline looms, ODI is working closely with other partners in the Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC) to carry out research and push for action around MDG1: the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.

The emphasis is on chronic poverty – how people enter it, and how they escape – leading to a shift in poverty policies in, for example, India and Uganda.

The CPRC is a global partnership of universities, researchers and non-governmental organisations, including experts from Bangladesh, India, South Africa, Uganda and five west African countries. In the UK, ODI works alongside the Universities of Manchester and Sussex, Development Initiatives and HelpAge International, and plays a leading role in CPRC work on inter-generational poverty.

Having highlighted the numbers living in chronic poverty in its first *Chronic Poverty Report* (2004-2005) – anywhere between 320 and 443 million people – the partnership went further with its second report in 2008. This outlined five poverty 'traps': poor work opportunities; spatial disadvantage, such as living in slums; insecurity and poor health; and limited citizenship. The report proposed policy responses: public services for the hard to reach; building individual and collective assets; anti-discrimination and gender empowerment; and strategic urbanisation and migration. The report was timely, coming right before the G-8 meeting in Japan, and the MDG review at the United Nations in New York, where the Commonwealth Secretary-General enthused about its emphasis on social protection.

CPRC work on inter-generational poverty at ODI in 2008 included a study on Northern Uganda, looking at the long-term impact of conflict on education and poverty in conflict-affected communities. It found most people in the study area living in chronic poverty, with low levels of education. At one study site, only one person had completed secondary school in the past 30 years. The results suggested that education supports resilience, helping people to stay out of poverty during conflicts, and recover once conflicts are over. As one respondent said: 'education gives me the courage to try new crops'.

The study was welcomed by the International Network on Education in Emergencies, the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children and UNICEF, for their work on the importance of education in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Finally, the CPRC proposal for a social protection MDG target has made waves, while a European Union staff paper on the MDGs and the financial crisis used CPRC research to generate debate on what should be added to the MDGs.

Drawn from ODI's Annual Report 2009, available from: www.odi.org.uk

'No person should live without hope: their loss is a loss for us all. We must go forward together, and this report shows us how'

John Sulston, Nobel Laureate

People fall into chronic poverty, but also escape. CPRC outlines the traps and escape routes.

