REPORT

THE COST OF POVERTY IN THE CARIBBEAN

By

The International Institute for social, Political and Economic Change (IISPEC) and Co-sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

March 17-19, 2008

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, Dr. Arnoldo Ventura, Science Advisor to the Prime Minister of Jamaica and Dr. Jaslin Salmon, then Advisor in the Office of the Prime Minister and head of Jamaica's Poverty Eradication Programme, began a conversation about the need to have a workshop on the "Cost of Poverty in the Caribbean." Subsequent the initial conversations, Dr. Michael Witter, an Economist at the University of the West Indies, Mona was invited to join the discussions. The three, agreed to collaborate on the project, but due to unavailability of funding, the project was shelved for about two years. During this time, Dr. Salmon founded a think tank, International Institute for Social, Political and Economic Change (IISPEC) and left the Office of the Prime Minister.

It was decided that the collaboration would continue under the IISPEC banner, and the group would explore funding possibilities. In early 2007, Dr. Ventura indicated that he had approached UNESCO/Jamaica, and its Director Dr. Kwame Boafo had expressed a great deal of interest in providing some funding for the event.

At that point, Dr. Salmon of IISPEC re-drafted the proposal and met with Dr. Ventura, Dr. Witter, and Dr. Boafo. It was agreed that UNESCO would be a co-sponsor of a Seminar on the "Cost of Poverty in the Caribbean" and additional funding would be sought. It was also agreed that five papers would be prepared for the occasion.

A steering committee was established and IISPEC assumed the responsibility for presenting to the committee, a draft plan for the Seminar, and for executing the approved plan.

In the mean time, Dr. Boafo sought and obtained the agreement of *Mr. Pierre Sane, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences* to be the Keynote speaker at the opening ceremony.

After the appropriate consultations, it was agreed that the date of the Seminar would be March 17-19, 2008, and IISPEC assumed the task of planning the event.

Invitations were issued to representatives from member countries of CARICOM and various organizations and individuals in Jamaica. In the final analysis, the seminar was attended by about 60 persons, including a representative from each of the following Caribbean countries or organizations:

CARICOM
Bahamas
Grenada
St. Lucia
St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Montserrat
Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)

OPENING CEREMONY

The Opening Ceremony which occupied the first part of the first day, was chaired by Mr. Trevor Gordon-Somers, Chairman of the IISPEC's Board of Directors, and was attended by over 60 persons. After making welcome and introductory remarks, the Chairman spoke briefly about the genesis of IISPEC, and then introduced Dr. Salmon, IISPEC's President/CEO who extended greetings, and outlined the purpose, organization and structure of the Seminar. The Chairman next introduced Dr. Kwame Boafo, Director of UNESCO/Jamaica, who also extended greetings and expressed delight at being involved in so important a Seminar.

The keynote speaker in the person of Mr. Pierre Sane, Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences of UNESCO was next introduced. As expected, his speech was the high point of the morning. His speech emphasized the unacceptability of the existence of poverty, and he took the position that poverty eradication is best approached from the point of view that the existence of poverty is in effect the denial of human rights. He lauded the theme and approach of the Seminar, and emphasized that "If there is a central issue to be addressed at the beginning of the 21st century it is the realization of the right proclaimed in Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration can be fully realized". Thus, the underlying question is: "How can we analyze poverty from a human rights perspective and, more importantly, how do we analyze human rights from the perspective of the poor?"

 The consensus of the participants is that the opening ceremony was a remarkable success. After a break of about half an hour, the actual Seminar was convened.

THE SEMINAR

The Seminar was organized in six (6) sessions, each of the first five (5) sessions with the exception of session two (2), revolved around a paper; after the paper was presented, a discussant was asked to reflect on the presentation. Two papers dealing with the issue of human rights were presented in session two (2). After the presentation(s) the participants were divided into three discussion groups, one group dealing with practice related issues, the other dealing with programme related issues, and the third dealing with issues related to policy. Each discussion group session lasted for approximately 45 minutes after which the participants regrouped for a plenary session. The 6th session was a field visit to Lionel Town an impoverished community in the Parish of Clarendon.

<u>DAY ONE</u>

Three papers were presented in two sessions on the first day as follows:

Session 1

An Overview of Poverty in the Caribbean by Dr. Jaslin U. Salmon, President/CEO, IISPEC

Discussant: Mr. Sean Ffrench, Lecturer, UWI, Mona

Session 2

The Total Cost of Human Rights Denials by Dr. Arnoldo Ventura, Science Adivsor to the Jamaican Prime Minister

Discussant: Mrs. Arlene Harrison-Henry, Director of the Independent Human Rights Commission

Budgeting for the Implications of Human Rights in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers by Ms. Chifa Tekaya, Coordinator of UNESCO programme on Poverty and Human Rights

 Discussant: Mr. Roderick Rainford, Economist

<u>DAY TWO</u>

Three papers were presented in three sessions on the second day as follows

Session 3

The Socio-Economic Cost of Poverty in the Caribbean by Dr. Michael Witter, Senior Lecturer, Department of Economics UWI, Mona

Discussant: Dr. Warren Benfield, Economist, Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social & Economic Studies

Session 4

The Environmental Cost of Poverty. by Ms. Denise Forrest, Principal, Forest and Associates

 Discussant: Ms. Nicole O'Reggio, Ministry of Environment

Session 5

The Psychological Cost of Poverty by Dr. Frederick Hickling, Department of Community Health and Psychiatry

Discussant: Dr. Yvonnie Bailey-Davidson, Belvue Hospital

DAY THREE

The third day was spent visiting an impoverished community, thereby giving the seminar participants an opportunity to discuss the issues raised in the previous days with people who are living in poverty. The Social Development Commission (SDC) was quite helpful in the community and in organizing this facet of the seminar.

Session 6

Field visit to Lionel Town: Departed 8:00 a.m. and returned about 3:00 p.m.

SUMMARY OF PLENARY SESSIONS

As stated earlier, immediately after each paper was presented, participants were divided into three discussion groups; one group discussed issues related to current **practice,** the other discussed issues relate to **programmes, and** the third group dealt with **policy related** issues. After the group discussions related to each paper, participants met in plenary to share with others the product of the group discussions. The following is a synopsis of the presentations during each plenary. It is to be noted that in keeping with the way the groups were divided, the plenary presentations and discussions were focused on issues related to **practice, programmes** and **policy.**

Session 1

An Overview of Poverty in the Caribbean – (Dr. Jaslin U. Salmon Ph.D.)

Practice

Grenada – 32% in poverty (1998)

- Has Safety Net Programme – allocation of funds
- Food Basket established

Jamaica

- Has Path Programme which targets children for cash payments

St. Lucia

- Has a Poverty Reduction Fund

Programmes

Urban Poverty/ Rural Poverty

- Countries have National Poverty Eradication Programmes
  - Need to strengthen the participation of stakeholders, eg. NGO's, CBO's at the initial stage of planning in the general sense.
  - Strategy should be to design, implement, monitor, and educate.

- Need to target beneficiaries/data collection
  - Technical Assistance needed
  - Develop a programme of technical co-operation

- Improvement in partnership involving the business community, Science & Technology.
  - Need to Strengthen & develop capacity building
  - Focus on education & training
  - Provide scholarships to encourage more research
  - Make CDB/CTCS more national in focus

- Funding of Social Development programme to reduce technical dependency
- De-politicisation of poverty reduction/eradication programmes
  - Needs national consensus

- Review models currently being used in the Region

Employment

- Programmes developed to address employment needs (country/regionally)
    - Programmes, which lead to certification of skills.
    - Apprenticeship
    - Incubation activities

- Land Programmes
    - Programmes to address the silent demographic transition

- Programmes should emphasize

    - implementation
    - effectiveness

Challenges facing programmes

- the use of target vs. demand driven
- underfunding
- political commitment
- need for independent agencies
- co-ordination among agencies
- public-private sector partnership
- immigration
- minimum wage
- CSME

<u>Policy</u>

- Some Issues Discussed:

    - Need for regional approach
    - Impact of global warming = climatic changes
    - Lack of regional poverty eradication policy
    - Disconnect between science, technology taught at universities and application to impact poverty. e.g. in agriculture
    - Policy related to access to land
    - Policy dealing with the impact of tourism on agriculture, craft, poverty & general way of life

- **Polices Needed in Following Areas:**

  - Access to Land & Housing
  - Education & Knowledge transfer & dissemination
  - Research/Study regarding impact of climate changes on environment & agriculture in particular
  - Regional Trade agreement

Session 2

The Total Cost of Human Rights Denials – *(Dr. Arnoldo Ventura) &*
Budgeting for the Implications of Human Rights in Poverty Reduction Strategy – (Ms. Chifa Tekaya**)**

Practice

- Short Term
  - Lobby government to ensure that preparation for African-Caribbean Diaspora become part of the national regional-CARICOM agenda.
  - Research to be undertaken by legal/ NGO's/ academic/ dissemination of information/ research.
  - Government has to undertake land ownership:
  - Issues of squatting (regularize this area)

  - Titles & registration of land

  - Identify owners of land that is titled

- Discussion on Human Rights Budgeting
  - There must be an impatience on eradication of poverty

Programmes

- Human Resource is just another dimension of slavery

- What are the aspects of poverty that impinge on human resources then look at what has to be done in terms of programmes to address the issues which deal with human rights.

- Education is Key

- Education is needed for Police and Law enforcement in general, since they frequently violate human rights in doing their jobs.

- Educate Political Leaders to have a better understanding of the relationship between poverty and human rights.

- Once educated, political leaders will then be in a better position to develop and implement poverty reduction programmes which take Human Rights into consideration.

- Utilize the resources of the regional universities to educate the people of the region about the relationship between Poverty and Human Rights.

- Involve the people and by extension the poor in the decision making process.

- Develop plan & Poverty Assessment--more and more the participatory approach is being taken; that should be commended and encouraged

- Persons affected should be involved in the planning process – the poor should have a voice.

- Poor should be targeted for edification and understanding on economics of human rights approach to their problems.

Policy

- Need to review and/or develop policies in the following areas:

    - Cost of Human Rights Denial
    - Budgeting & implications for HR in PRSPs
    - Promotion of economic growth
    - Investment in human capital
    - Health as a human rights (access to all)
    - Housing as a Human right – housing policies to address needs of poor
    - Attempts being made to legislate for indigents to be removed from conditions of poverty

- Recommendations:

    - Place Poverty as a Human Rights issue within the national development agenda

    - Review existing PRSP/ countries receiving debt relief – how effective for reduction of poverty

- Policies explicitly placing Human Rights at the center of the Development agenda not known to exist in the region.

- Insufficient research on social & psychological cost.

Session 3

The Socio-Economic Cost of Poverty in the Caribbean – (Dr. Michael Witter)

Practice

- Programmes & Policies are done for political expedience

  Recommendations

  - Programmes and policies should be mission driven

  - Clear targeting and involvement of all stakeholders

- Lack of public awareness and access to these programmes

  Recommendations

  - Utilization of the media in bringing about increased awareness of the programmes involved.

- The Poverty eradication programmes are often seen as an unavoidable cost to society rather than an investment in society.

  Recommendations

  - Programmes should be seen as an investment in the society

- A Dependency on state resources exists.

  Recommendations

  - Foster productivity and self sufficiency

- Support income generating activities

- Structure the education system to take into account persons who are more technical rather than academically inclined.

- Focus on communities and individuals as units of intervention

Recommendations

- Include intervention at the household level

- Ongoing research and data collection

- Considerable monitoring of programmes, as well as evaluation & redesign

Programmes

Measuring cost of poverty in the Caribbean

- Identify Consensus on indicators as they relate to measuring the cost of poverty.

   - Develop and identify indicators that are regionally relevant & appropriate.

- Develop systems for data collection & analysis as it relates to the objectives above

- Strengthen existing mechanisms for funding to build capacity regionally.
  e.g. SPARC

- Iimprove the human resource capacity in qualitative/quantitative research

   - Creating opportunities for improved delivery and public education.

- Review the Statistics Act

- Sensitize the Public & Policy Makers on the Cost of Poverty

- Measurement of the Cost of Poverty should be on the agenda of regional institutions

- Inclusion in the curriculum of tertiary institutions the measurement of the cost of poverty (NB. Not only Sociology)

Policy

Policy Issues – Sociological and Economic Cost of Poverty

- Critical Factors

    - needs of specific countries or regions

Data issues

Policy to be developed to ensure that health costs etc. are properly captured.

- Policy to be developed to improve data collection.
    - special attention should be paid to generating statistics that are relevant to the focus of government, be it health, education or poverty.
    - more attention needs to be paid to socio-economic areas.
    - sensitization on the importance of data being collected, and implications of non-response.
    - design of instruments to better retrieve data, public and private data collection

- Need for policy on sharing of data. Inter-agency co-operation. Access to data by researchers. Not enough attention paid to the poor. Government researchers do not understand what poverty really is. Ongoing research necessary. Poverty is a dynamic phenomenon.

- Better policy on data management needed in order to improve the quality of statistics.

- Policy-Programmes must be evidence based. Data collected must be analyzed and reported on. Any programme or project proposed must be based on data/evidence.

- Provide housing/land to alleviate squatting. Policy to identify persons who cannot access proper housing through the market must be temporary.

- Need policy on the provision of concessional housing for persons who may not be able to afford housing now, but will at sometime in the future.

- Need for social housing, Government needs to intervene in rent market to subsidize cost. Social homes need to be maintained. Possibly through self maintenance.

- Train occupants of social housing in areas such as plumbing etc. so that they can maintain homes and generate income for themselves.

- Policy to ensure that only the people who need these social houses gain access.

- If State takes active role in social housing, infrastructure associated with these homes e.g. water, light, and waste disposal will be provided. However cost may be too high for the poor. Cost may be subsidized. Social Housing must be temporary. Train poor to access resources for themselves.

- Local Government should not be aligned with politics. Municipal authorities should not be tied to political parties, so as to eliminate exclusion of the poor.
- Local government reform – insulation from politics – assistance to the poor too tied to politics.

- Better data needs to be collected to determine cost borne by poor and access by poor.

- Assess cost of providing potable water vs not providing.

- A policy on the role of non-profit organizations is needed. People come together to mobilize resources to address poverty, but the cost associated with establishing such organizations too high. Increase incentives to establish non-profit organizations to address the issue of poverty.

Education

Policy to be implemented so that the poor is not excluded from tertiary education.

Psychological

Financial stress can push individuals who are predisposed to mental illness over board.

Investment needs to be encouraged in order to combat the cost of poverty

- Small and medium enterprise development.
- Investment leads to job creation.

The Gender profile of poverty

Majority of the poor belong to single-female headed household, however, not significant.

Males at greater risk

- financial pressure
- pressure of responsibility

Government to adapt family-focus planning.

Other Policy issues

- Need for regional policy on poverty

- No policy on the effect of tourism on farming

- Need for policy related to access to land

- Need for regional policy on the transfer of technology to farmers

- Research leading to the policy on climate change

- Review trade agreements and their impact on poverty

- Explore the idea that the region is facing poverty in leadership.

Session 4

The Environmental Cost of Poverty – *(*Ms. Denise Forrest*)*

Practice

Common Features among Caribbean Countries:

- Indigenous species easily threatened
- Environmentally vulnerable due to geographical location
- Impact of mining sand, bauxite, etc.

Country Practices

- Efforts to protect mangroves, where construction is taking place
- NGOs/ government working to protect environment & development

Recommendations

- Increased collaboration among agencies
- Government programmes/policies related to conservation vis-à-vis tourism
- Land use policies
- "Greening" of tourist industry

<u>Programmes</u>

- Land & Housing solutions to be reviewed, with a view to strengthening weak areas.
- Implement programmes which deal with the use of land e.g. Replenishment
- Initiate balanced investment in environment
    - provide alternative methods & technology
- develop resettlement and planning programme
    - for persons who live in low lying and other vulnerable areas
    - enforcement
- Disaster mitigation needs to be owned and strengthened
    - monitoring mandatory
- A programme of accountability by elected officials – counselors etc.
- Design Education suitable for different levels
    - simple leaflets
    - images etc
    - dramatic presentations

<u>Policy</u>

Issues:

- Data from Environmental Specialists must be more quantified and related to situations affecting society. The lack of quantifiable data will affect the ability to form policy.

- Environmental Policy tends to be directed by international agencies. This affects relevance of projects to local persons.

- While several environmental agencies exist in Jamaica, information is not shared; little is mentioned on the effects on consumers.

- Government provides insufficient support for the Environment. Lack of employment in environmental sector.

<u>Policy Suggestions</u>

- Environmental Data must be collected using an interdisciplinary approach, across various ministries.

- Beautification Programme – planting of trees and flowers in old communities involving members of the community.

- Community Planning must incorporate environmental concerns. (i.e. paints, recreation … etc.

- Need more policy on protection, monitoring and enforcement of … resources (i.e. Key watering bed areas)

- Greater support for environmental issues needed from political parties.

- Proper zoning and enforcement – creation of no build zones, greater awareness of areas to protect the public.

- Greater education and enforcement of proper waste disposal especially among squatter communities.

- Assessment of Transportation System, especially the lack of sufficient public transportation and the implications on the environment.

- Greater support for recycling programs in the region.

- There is need for a National Environmental Policy and National Environmental Management Policy (in Eastern Caribbean)

Recommendations

- More focus on terrestrial environment

- Holistic view of development needed

- Better enforcement of regulations

- Environment needs to be more central/ infused into other discussions (eg. Economic)

- Economic Development overshadows environmental considerations. Governments "turn a blind eye" to environmental abuse by foreign investors.

Recommendations

- Better fit between political will and practice

- Government Agencies (e.g. JSIF) implementing environmental management systems and obtaining ISO certification

Session 5

The Psychological Cost of Poverty – (Prof. Frederick Hickling)

Practice

- The psychology of poverty has been overlooked in development planning
- Psychology has been applied to human growth and development/behavioural studies but not to poverty

Recommendations

We need a holistic approach to human development/poverty reduction planning/strategies which incorporate the psychological dimension.

- Human Development Planning has not been holistic due to lack of resources.

Recommendations

- Better utilization of existing human resources for psycho-social support e.g. Community clubs, guidance councilors, nurses, social workers, churches, skilled retirees
- Train and retrain in appropriate interventions
- Lack of research, dissemination and analysis of information related to the psychology of poverty.

Recommendations

- Variety of media, for dissemination of information

Programmes

- Examine the appropriateness of existing programmes which deal with deviance, juvenile delinquency etc.
- Package programmes in such a way the stigma associated with mental health is eliminated; e.g. putting a cultural spin in programme.
- Resource identification
- Include Cultural therapy in the education system
    - specialized trainers are required
    - cultural therapy agents in schools
- Need programmes and documentaries (for example) that will support such initiatives, CDs, DVDs, and Media.
- Implement a programme which provides information on how persons can do self repair to reduce psychological cost.
- Programmes, which address the psycho-social

Policy

- Need policies for training teachers to spot special problems with children
- Need policies to help people with problems at work
- Need policies on the reintegration of deportees
- Need policies related to working with children of parents with problems.

Session 6

Field visit to Lionel Town in the Parish of Clarendon -

Here eighteen of the Seminar participants went by bus to meet with 15 members of a very impoverished section of the community, and had discussions on the topics that were dealt with in the working sessions. The discussions lasted approximately 2 hours and were direct, explicit and informative. The session ended after having lunch with the community people.

We reconvened at the Seminar hotel after returning from the field trip and spent approximately 2 hours in a wrap-up session.

WRAP UP

We reviewed the work over the past three days and the unanimous conclusion was that the seminar was well organized and the objectives were achieved. Participants expressed satisfaction

with the Caribbean focus, and indicated a desire for further work and collaboration in this area. The following summarizes the conclusions reached:

- The Concept – "Cost of Poverty" is a good start

- Dimensions of Poverty add to understanding

- Definitions are important to understanding poverty in the region

- Lack of integration and coordination must be addressed

- Why do we tolerate poverty?

- Need for better quality data

- Need for feeling of independence among poor

- Field visit highlighted the qualitative dimensions of poverty

- Need to disseminate data

- Political influence & impact on poverty requires greater attention

- Rights in relation to poverty in the region are usually not discussed; this must change.

- Need to change the language re poverty
- Need for reduction in poverty throughout the region

- The role of the political economy in poverty ought to be explored

- Need for knowledge transfer

- Poverty eradication needs to be treated with greater urgency.

- There is need to re-evaluate the role of International Development Partners (IDPs)

- There was great concern about the reliance on "Average" e.g. per capita as the basis for describing poverty.

EAVLUATION

Participants were asked to complete an evaluation form indicating how they felt about the seminar. The instrument consisted of 10 items to which participants respond on a four point scale. The responses are recorded in the attached appendix 1.