

Centre for Global Health, Population, Poverty, and Policy

Seminar on Fertility and Poverty: micro and macro linkages
28-29 January 2010 at the University of Southampton

Background

Poverty reduction is a core target of the international development agenda. The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development brought the importance of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) to the attention of policy-makers worldwide. The subsequent neglect of SRH, and its exclusion from the Millennium Development Goals have, however, resulted in a patchy evidence base concerning the links between poverty and SRH. Interest on the links between poverty and fertility waned in the mid-1990s, when it became clear that global fertility decline was under way – even in sub-Saharan Africa. However, a recent resurgence in studies related to failing family planning programmes has emerged due to evidence of stalling fertility decline in some countries. At the macro level, poverty – manifested in low investment in basic social services such as education and health – can have significant implications for reproductive health and fertility trends. Low levels of health investment keep mortality levels high, and failing to provide the contraceptive services needed to achieve fertility decline keeps fertility higher than it might be otherwise. At the micro level, some researchers have proposed that large families are a result of poverty, due to the need for security in old age but the evidence for this ‘insurance policy’ hypothesis is lacking. Poverty may however impede access to SRH services if couples have to pay for contraceptive commodities, which then leads to unwanted pregnancies. There is a need to synthesise these issues and to propose a coherent future research agenda that focuses on existing gaps in knowledge of the fertility-poverty link as well as methodological challenges.

Papers are being invited that address the following:

- i) New evidence on the linkages between fertility and poverty (at both macro and micro levels)
- ii) Barriers to contraceptive use and safe abortion amongst those living in poverty
- iii) Evidence on the intergenerational flow of wealth and high fertility as insurance for old-age security hypothesis
- iv) Interventions and strategies for meeting high unmet need for family planning among the under-served that have worked (e.g. male involvement, voucher schemes, social marketing)
- v) Methodological advances in measuring unmet need for family planning

This is one in a series of four seminars on “Poverty and Sexual and Reproductive Health: Towards Unravelling the Vicious Circle” where academics and practitioners will meet to review evidence from cutting edge research in the field and to identify gaps for further scientific research, policy, and practice. We are inviting scholars and practitioners to attend this exciting two-day seminar to be held at the University of Southampton. We also encourage applications from early career researchers and PhD students. Limited bursaries are available for UK-based early career fellows with innovative and high quality presentation.

To apply please submit an abstract of up to 250 words by **16th November** to rl@soton.ac.uk. Successful applicants will be sent invitation letters by **1st December 2009**. For more information about our forthcoming seminars please visit <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/socsci/ghp3/Events/>

Collaborators of the seminars series:

London School of Economics, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, City University, Loughborough University, and University of Warwick.