

INSTITUTE FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES WORKSHOP

Current Frontiers in the Study of Economic Mobility in Developing Countries

October 13, 2009

423 ILR Conference Center, Cornell University

(Revised 10/7/09)

Please RSVP to Anneliese at [amt58@cornell.edu](mailto:amt58@cornell.edu) to register for this event.

PROGRAM

- 8:30-9:00 a.m. Continental Breakfast
- 9:00-9:15 a.m. Welcome and Introduction  
[Ken Roberts](#), Robert S. Harrison Director, Institute for the Social Sciences & Prof. of Government  
[Chris Barrett](#), Persistent Poverty Team Leader & Prof. of Applied Econ. & Management  
[David Sahn](#), Persistent Poverty Team Member & Prof. of Economics in the Division of Nutritional Sciences and Department of Economics
- 9:15-10:00 a.m. “Why Don’t We See Poverty Convergence?”  
[Martin Ravallion](#), Director of Development Research Group, World Bank
- Abstracts: We see signs of convergence in average living standards amongst developing countries and of greater progress against poverty in faster growing economies. Yet we do not see poverty convergence; the poorest countries are not enjoying higher rates of poverty reduction. The paper tries to explain why. Consistently with some growth theories, analysis of a new data set for 100 developing countries reveals an adverse effect on consumption growth of high initial poverty incidence at a given initial mean. Starting with a high incidence of poverty also entails a lower rate of progress against poverty at any given growth rate (and conversely poor countries tend to experience less steep increases in poverty during recessions). Thus, for many poor countries, the growth advantage of starting out with a low mean is lost due to their high poverty rates.
- Biography: Martin Ravallion is Director of the Development Research Group of the World Bank. He has held various positions in the Bank, since he joined as an Economist in 1988. He holds a Ph.D. in economics from the London School of Economics, and has taught economics at L.S.E., Oxford University, the Australian National University, and Princeton University. His main research interests over the last 25 years have concerned poverty and policies for fighting it. He has advised numerous governments and international agencies on this topic, and he has written extensively on this and other subjects in economics, including three books and over 170 papers in scholarly journals and edited volumes.
- 10:00-10:15 a.m. Discussant 1: [Stephen L. Morgan](#), Persistent Poverty Team Member, Prof. of Sociology, and Director of the Center for the Study of Inequality  
Discussant 2: [Nancy Chau](#), Assoc. Prof. of Applied Econ. & Management
- 10:15-10:45 a.m. Open discussion
- 10:45-11:15 a.m. Break
- 11:15 a.m.-12:00 p.m. “Looking Forward: Asset-based Approaches to Poverty and Economic Mobility”  
[Michael Carter](#), Prof. of Agricultural and Applied Economics, University of California-Davis/ University of Wisconsin-Madison

Abstract: Asset-based approaches to poverty and economic mobility focus on the structural determinants of economic well-being. While theoretical work in this tradition has shown that poverty traps can exist, their empirical relevance remains unclear. After a

brief review using a Kenyan example that illustrates why asset-based approaches to poverty traps are important from a policy perspective, this paper will consider the difficulties that surround efforts to empirically identify poverty traps. Drawing on new work from Burkina Faso, the paper will then illustrate an indirect approach to the identification of poverty traps. This approach uses behavior that could not otherwise be explained (asset smoothing rather than consumption smoothing in the face of income shocks) to detect poverty traps and the asset levels below which they occur.

Biography: Michael Carter is professor of agricultural and resource economics at the University of California, Davis and director of the BASIS Collaborative Research Support Program. His research examines how the distribution of assets shapes, and is shaped by, economic growth. His current projects include analysis of poverty dynamics and productive social safety nets, and feature a suite of projects that design, pilot and evaluate index insurance contracts as mechanisms to alleviate chronic poverty and deepen agricultural and rural financial markets.

12:00-12:15 p.m. Discussant 1: Stephen Younger, Associate Director, Food & Nutrition Policy Program, Discussant 2: [Kevin Morrison](#), Assistant Prof. of Government

12:15-12:45 p.m. Open discussion

12:45-1:45 p.m. Lunch

1:45-2:30 p.m. “Human Capital and Socio-Economic Mobility”  
[Paul Glewwe](#), Prof. of Applied Economics, University of Minnesota

Abstract: One of the most important mechanisms by which parents provide for their children's social and economic well-being is by providing them with human capital, especially education and health. Governments' education and health policies can also serve to improve the future well-being of today's children, and more specifically to promote intergenerational mobility and poverty reduction. This paper provides a broad overview of the role played by human capital in raising individuals' economic and social status, the processes by which human capital are acquired, and what is known about how government policies can affect the acquisition and distribution of human capital in the population.

Biography: Paul Glewwe is a professor in the Department of Applied Economics at the University of Minnesota, where he has been on the faculty since 1999. From 1986 to 1999 he was a research economist at the World Bank. He received his B.A. in economics from the University of Chicago in 1979, and his Ph.D. in economics from Stanford University in 1985. His research focuses on education in developing countries, especially on the determinants of student learning and enrollment. He also conducts research on child nutrition, inequality, economic mobility and poverty in developing countries.

2:30-2:45 p.m. Discussant 1: [Rebecca Stoltzfus](#), Prof. of Nutritional Science and PIN Co-Director Discussant 2: [Parfait Eloundou-Enyegue](#), Assoc. Prof. of Development Sociology

2:45-3:15 p.m. Open discussion

3:15-3:45 p.m. Break

3:45-4:30 p.m.

“Mobility and Intertemporal Poverty”

[Jean-Yves Duclos](#), Prof. of Economics, Université de Laval

Abstract: The presentation describes various approaches to assess mobility and intertemporal poverty. The emphasis is put on comparisons of mobility and intertemporal poverty that are robust to a range of measurement assumptions, in the spirit of the stochastic dominance literature. An adaptation of recent statistical testing procedures to comparisons of mobility and intertemporal poverty is also discussed. Two views of mobility are mostly considered, either based on measures of absolute mobility or on transition matrices. The assessment of intertemporal poverty is made by adapting a general multidimensional procedure to the case of cardinal indicators of well-being that can be compared across time.

Biography: Jean-Yves Duclos is Professor of Economics at Université Laval as well as network leader of the Poverty and Economic Policy (PEP) international research network. He is also a former director of CIRPÉE (Centre Interuniversitaire sur le Risque, les Politiques Économiques et l'Emploi). His areas of research are in Public Economics, Econometrics, Welfare Economics, Development Economics and Labour Economics. He is a past President of the Société canadienne de science économique and he is currently editor of Journal of Economic Inequality, member of the Editorial Board of the Review of Income and Wealth, and member of the Executive Council of the Society for the Study of Economic Inequality and of the Canadian Economic Association.

4:30-4:45 p.m.

Discussant 1: [Kim Weeden](#), Associate Professor and Chair of Sociology

Discussant 2: [Erik Thorbecke](#), H.E. Babcock Professor of Economics and Food Economics, emeritus

4:45-5:15 p.m.

Open discussion

5:15 p.m.

Break

6:00 p.m.

Visiting speakers meet rides to dinner

6:15 p.m.

Dinner for speakers (by invitation)

Madeline's Restaurant (215 E. State St., Ithaca, NY 14850; 607-277-2253)