ESRC-DFID Research on Children and Youth in Africa

Putting children first:
Identifying solutions
and taking action to
tackle poverty and
inequality in Africa
23–25 October 2017

This booklet was prepared for the international conference: "Putting children first: Identifying solutions and taking action to tackle poverty and inequality in Africa" which took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 23–25 October 2017.

The conference was hosted by:

The Ethiopian Centre for Child Research, Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI), the Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP), the ESRC-DFID Impact Initiative, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the Ethiopia Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA), and the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, including African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP), Save the Children, UNICEF and Young Lives.

FIFA Children's Day, Somalia.

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Children, young people and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa

In spite of progress to address global poverty (according to the World Bank and UNICEF nearly 1.1 billion people escaped extreme poverty since 1990[Ref 1]) poverty remains widespread with children and young people disproportionately affected. Children in sub-Saharan Africa face critical levels of poverty – estimates suggest that

9 out of 10 children in extreme poverty in 2030 will live in this region[Ref 2]. To achieve the first Sustainable Development Goal, which calls to "end poverty in all its forms everywhere" by 2030, the needs and wellbeing of children and young people must be placed at the heart of sustainable development interventions.

ESRC-DFID's Strategic Partnership – research evidence for policy makers and practitioners

Formed in August 2005, the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Department for International Development (DFID) Strategic Partnership funds world class scientific research on a broad range of topics. The partnership contributes to a robust conceptual and empirical basis for development and funds both the Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research and the Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Programme[1].

- The **Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research** aims to enhance the quality and impact of social science research with the goal of reducing poverty amongst the poorest countries and peoples of the world. The primary aim of the scheme is to fund scientific research with potential impact on policy and practice for poverty reduction. Since 2005, the fund has enabled a portfolio of 167 projects[2] on issues ranging from child poverty and inequality, secure livelihoods, disability, inequality in education, health system reform, climate adaptation and much more besides. The most recent funding phase is due to complete in 2021. Visit www.esrc.ac.uk/international-development for further information.

- The **Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Programme** aims to provide policymakers and practitioners with concrete ideas on how to improve learning and understanding of how these will translate to their specific context and institutions, and to demonstrably inform relevant policy and programme decisions. The research funded through this programme focuses on how to raise learning outcomes for all by considering equity (including gender and disability) as well as quality dimensions of education. The current programme runs from January 2014 to March 2022. Visit www.esrc.ac.uk/eddev for further information.

[1] In addition to the Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research and the Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Programme, the ESRC-DFID Strategic Partnership also funds: the DFID-ESRC Growth Research Programme (DEGRP); a programme focusing on urbanization and risk in Africa; and works with DFID and funders outside the bilateral partnership on a range of programmes.

[2] According to the data available at the time of printing

Synthesis of research concerning children and young people

An Evidence Synthesis Research Award (ESRA) report, published in April 2015, highlighted the contributions of 91 research projects relating to children and young people enabled by the Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation at the time of the review period[3]:

Key findings

- Recognising young people's agency and the role they can play in research and policy making around the issues that matter to them most is critical.

- Mechanisms to promote young people's agency and an enhanced role in decision and policy making processes at all levels should be designed and implemented.

- Policy makers need to recognise existing knowledge gaps around social movements, religious and political ideologies, peacebuilding, addressing intergenerational poverty and identity-based social exclusion in relation to children and young people and their wellbeing and seek to address these in future research calls.

- More attention needs to be given to the impact of religion on children and young people's wellbeing. Understanding of how mobile technologies can be used to provide services to children and young people and improve wellbeing, as well as the negative impacts they can have on children and young people's lives, needs to be strengthened.

- National and regional governments need to place greater emphasis on community engagement programmes to reduce inequalities in new born survival rates.

- Addressing social norms around gender and marriage is key to improving children and young people's wellbeing and reducing poverty more widely.

Sources: "New knowledge on children and young people: A synthesis of evidence from the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research" by Rachel Marcus, Ella Page, Janey Stephenson and David Walker, April 2015, and the summary of the review and synthesis, are available to download from The Impact Initiative: www.theimpactinitiative.net/new-knowledge-children-and-young-people-synthesis-evidence

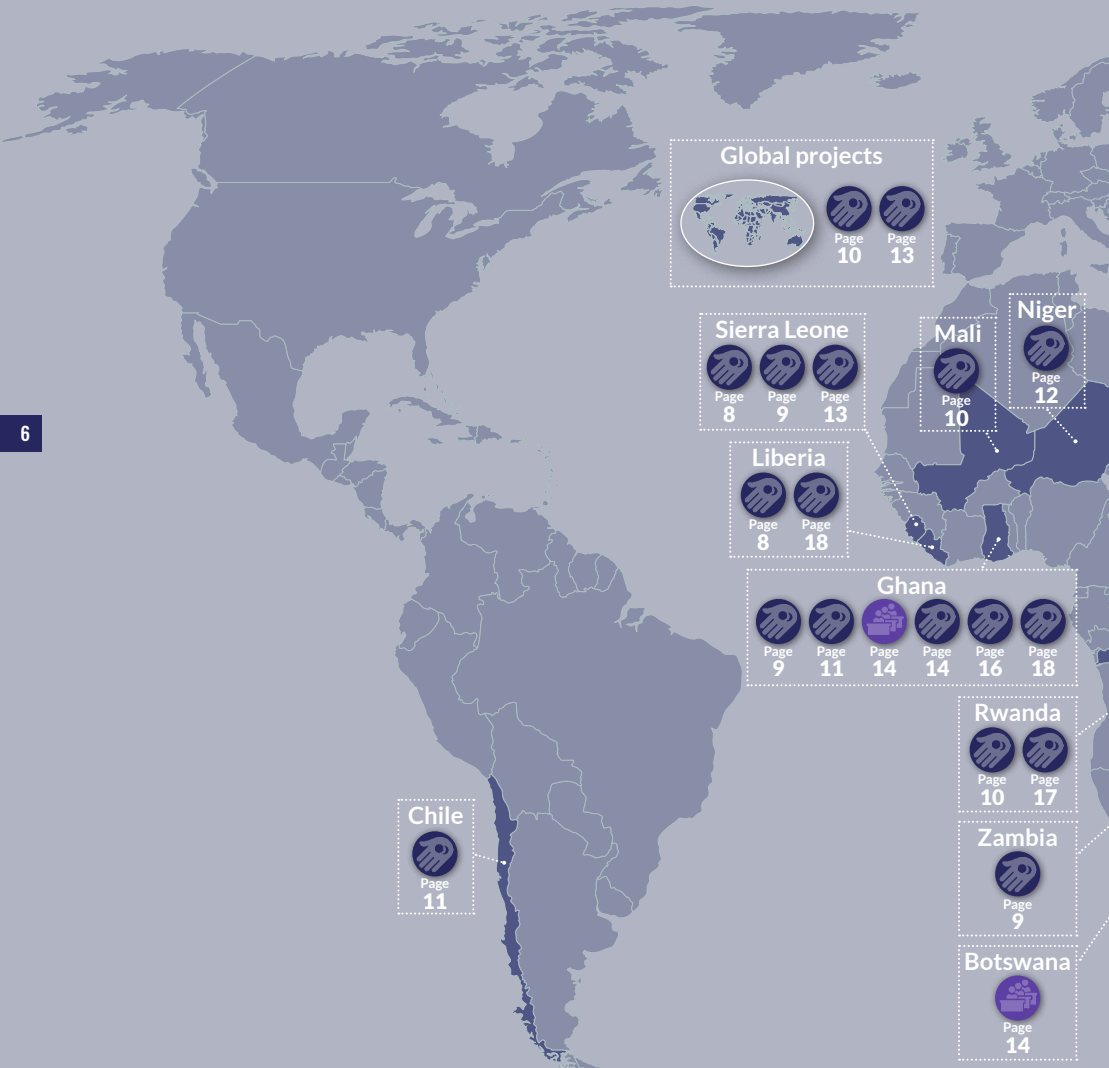Note: Wider research findings and policy lessons are available in both reports.

How children's choices influence their wellbeing and how research can help

The Impact Initiative, and Eldis[Ref 3], have produced an online resource highlighting the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund research that has directly engaged young people through peer research, or looked at the factors that enable (or inhibit) their ability to influence what happens in their lives. You can access "Research with children and young people: How children's choices influence their wellbeing and how research can help" from The Impact Initiative: www.theimpactinitiative.net/resources/key-issues-children-young-people

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[3] The report reviewed 126 grants which were funded at the start of the review period from July to December 2014.

ESRC-DFID Research on C

Research on children and youth in Africa enabled by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Department for International Development (DFID) Strategic Partnership from two funds[1]:

Global projects

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Sierra Leone

Page **8**   Page **9**   Page **13**

Mali

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Niger

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Liberia

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Ghana

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Rwanda

Page **10**   Page **17**

Zambia

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Chile

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Botswana

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[1] In addition to the Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research and the Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Programme, the ESRC-DFID Strategic Partnership also funds: the DFID-ESRC Growth Research Programme (DEGRP); a programme focusing on urbanisation and risk in Africa; and works with DFID and funders outside the bilateral partnership on a range of programmes.
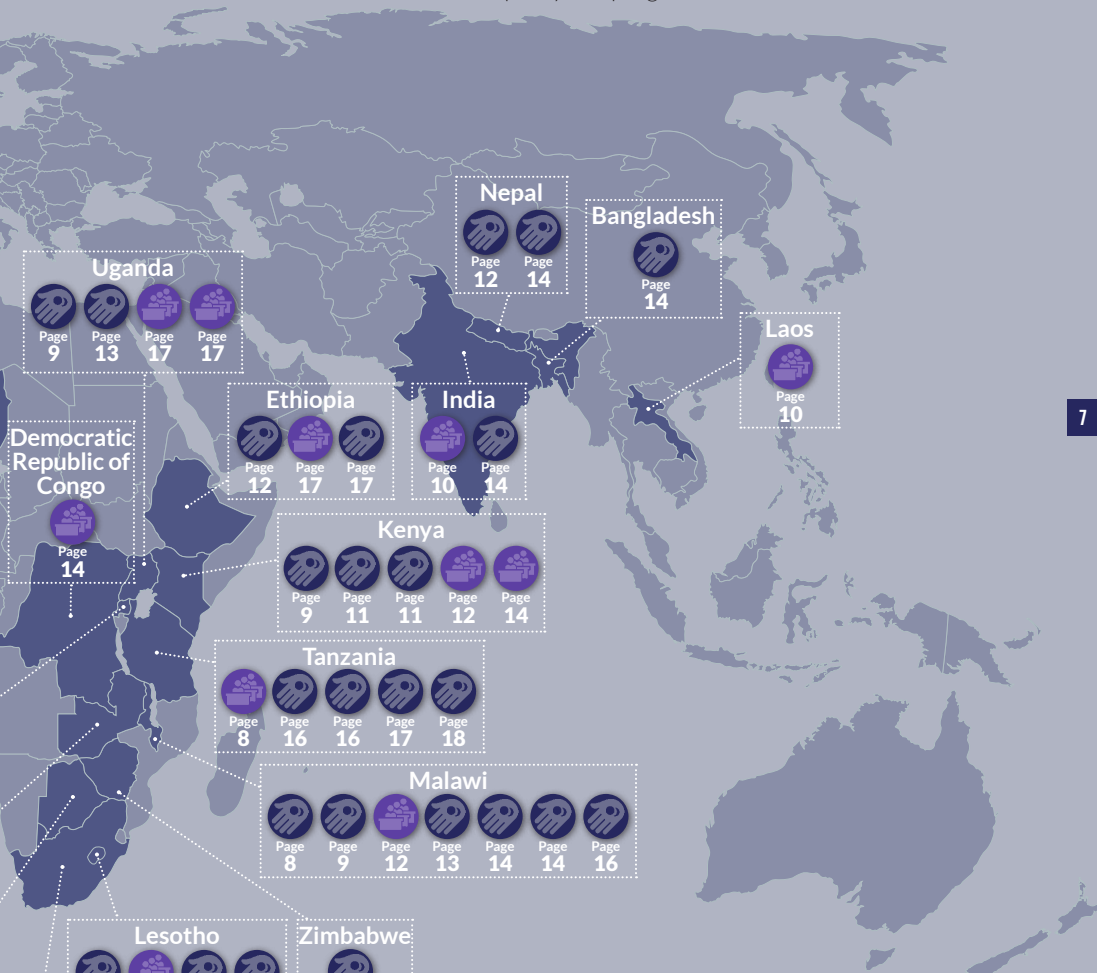
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Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research: aims to enhance the quality and impact of social science research with the goal of reducing poverty amongst the poorest countries and peoples of the world.

Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Programme: aims to provide policymakers and practitioners with concrete ideas on how to improve learning outcomes and to inform relevant policy and programme decisions.

Nepal
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Bangladesh
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Laos
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Uganda
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Ethiopia
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India
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Democratic Republic of Congo
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Kenya
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Tanzania
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Malawi
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Lesotho
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Zimbabwe
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South Africa
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ECONOMIC
& SOCIAL
RESEARCH
COUNCIL

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from the British people

Research jointly supported by the ESRC and DFID

Glossary of projects

To explore the research and its policy and practice implications, or for more information about The Impact Initiative for international development research, go to: www.theimpact.initiative.net

Projects enabled by the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research

Projects enabled by the ESRC-DFID Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Programme

AFLA - Assessment for learning in Africa: improving pedagogy and assessment for numeracy in foundation years
(South Africa, Tanzania)
April 2016 – March 2019
Therese N. Hopfenbeck
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, UK

The low level of numeracy skills of millions of poor and marginalised students, particularly in developing nations, is of international concern. This project focuses on improving these through developing teachers' and teacher trainers' pedagogical and assessment skills in extremely deprived urban areas in South Africa and Tanzania.

At the end of the feeder road: assessing the impact of track construction for motorbike taxis on agrarian development in Liberia
(Liberia, Sierra Leone)
June 2015 to May 2018

Krijn Peters
SWANSEA UNIVERSITY, UK

Transporting harvest from farmstead to village, or road, or market is a cumbersome task that often falls to women and children. A low cost alternative, such as transport by motorbike, could relieve both women and children of this task. This research explores whether it is possible to foster market-led agricultural growth and poverty alleviation in relation to a locally-driven rural transport revolution based on the motorbike taxi.

Averting 'New Variant Famine' in Southern Africa: building food-secure livelihoods with AIDS-affected young people
(Malawi, Lesotho)
May 2007 to April 2009
Nicola Ansell
BRUNEL UNIVERSITY, UK

Examined the impacts of the AIDS pandemic on the livelihoods of young people in rural Malawi and Lesotho.

Schools Open Day, Sudan.

UNAMID/Flickr licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Reports have suggested a link between the impacts of AIDS on children and their prospects of food security in adult life: for instance, children whose parents die of AIDS may fail to inherit land or other productive assets, and transmission of knowledge and skills between the generations may be disrupted, leaving young people ill-prepared to build food-secure livelihoods for themselves.

Bridging the gap: examining disability and development in four African countries

(Kenya, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia)
April 2005 to March 2018
Nora Groce
LEONARD CHESHIRE DISABILITY, UK

This research builds upon previous work on systemic barriers that disabled people encounter when accessing services to inform understanding of the correlation between barriers, disability, and multidimensional poverty.

Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa: developing a child-centred evidence base to improve policy and change thinking across Africa

(Ghana, Malawi, South Africa)
May 2006 to April 2010
Gina Porter
DURHAM UNIVERSITY, UK
Focused on the mobility constraints

faced by children in accessing health, educational and other facilities in sub-Saharan Africa, and sought to address the lack of direct information on how these constraints impact on children's current and future livelihood opportunities, and a lack of guidelines on how to tackle them.

Determinants of health care decisions: children's health in Mali (Mali)

October 2013 to March 2015
Mark Robert Dean
INNOVATIONS FOR POVERTY ACTION, USA

This project conducted a randomised controlled trial of two health care policies in a peri-urban region of Bamako, Mali: the provision of free primary care, and regular visits from health workers who taught mothers good practices and accompanied children to the doctor.

Development discourses: higher education and poverty reduction in South Africa (South Africa)

July 2008 to December 2009
Melanie Jane Walker
UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM, UK

Aimed to investigate the equity trajectory of higher education institutes and their role as 'engines of reform' and to develop a conceptual and practical application of human development and wellbeing through professional education and graduate professionals.

Does 'shame-proofing' anti-poverty programmes improve their effectiveness? Theory of change and impact policy evaluation in cross-national settings (Global)

July 2015 to October 2017
Robert LLoyd Walker
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, UK

Shame may serve to perpetuate poverty through eroding individual agency, while policies that stigmatise could be counterproductive in adding to the debilitating effects of shame. This study seeks to provide evidence by testing the effectiveness of social protection policies that have been 'shame-proofed' against those which have not.

Education systems, aspiration and learning in remote rural settings (India, Laos, Lesotho)

September 2016 to August 2016
Nicola Ansell
BRUNEL UNIVERSITY, UK

This project explored how education systems can develop effective polices and interventions that work with young people's aspirations to enhance learning outcomes and address structural disadvantage in remote rural places.

Engaging teachers in peacebuilding in postconflict contexts: evaluating education interventions in Rwanda and South Africa (Rwanda, South Africa)

September 2014 to August 2016
Yusuf Sayed
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX, UK

This study aimed to develop understanding about the conditions under which education interventions focused on teachers can promote peace, and mitigate and reduce violence. Also aimed to identify measures and processes that increase the effectiveness of programmes in conflict-affected situations.

Expanding education to reduce poverty: Public and private provision (Ghana)

June 2011 to November 2013
Kim Lehrer, Francis John Teal
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, UK

Research, conducted in Ghana, informed an evaluation of two closely related policy questions. The first explored how any expansion of education should be effected (the rates at which it should be expanded at various levels). The second examined how this expansion should be funded, and whether policy should seek to influence the divide between the public and private sector.

Gender, education and global poverty reduction initiatives (Kenya, South Africa)

October 2007 to March 2011
Elaine Sara Unterhalter
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, UK

Looked at how gender equality in, and through, schooling in contexts of poverty is understood. The research explored who participates in implementation, and how gender, schooling and global relations are negotiated. In addition, research examined the constraints experienced, how these are overcome, and what concerns about global obligations emerged.

Healthy urbanisation: tackling child malnutrition through intervening to change the social determinants of health in informal settlements and slums (Chile, Kenya)

October 2010 to March 2014
Pat Judith Pridmore
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, UK

Examined in what ways child malnutrition amongst families living in poverty in informal settlements and slums can be reduced through broadening community and stakeholder participation and by strengthening local political accountability for nutrition.

How can schools help African children cope with the impacts of disease and poverty? an investigation of 'AIDS competent' schools in rural Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe)

March 2012 to October 2014
Catherine Magda Campbell
LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE, UK

Explored how schools in Africa can help HIV-affected children cope with disease and poverty. The study sought to develop a model of the 'HIV competent school' which optimises children's inclusion, support and health.

How can technology improve learning? IT, education and welfare in Niger (Niger)

February 2014 to January 2017

Jenny Carson Aker

TUFTS UNIVERSITY, USA

Using qualitative and quantitative techniques, including a randomised control trial, this research addresses a number of research areas including: exploring the role of mobile phone technology in distance learning by providing educational content; and assessing the impact of the programme on children's educational attainment.

Implementing cross-age peer tutoring in the teaching of reading in Kenya (Kenya)

June 2015 to May 2017

Frank Hardman

UNIVERSITY OF YORK, UK

By providing school-based in-service education and training to teachers, the project explores to what extent cross-age peer tutoring (with and without the support of a freely available multi-media software programmes known as ABRACADABRA – ABRA– literacy software) can help them cope with the range of challenges they face in the Kenyan primary classroom.

Improving curriculum and teaching methods to influence policy and increase the quality of ECDE provision for children with disabilities in Malawi (Malawi)

June 2015 to May 2018

Paul Lynch

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM, UK

The research will be based on a socio-cultural model that situates learning within a cultural context in which family, peers and schooling are regarded as key in responding to children with early developmental delays and disabilities in rural settings.

Inclusive higher education learning outcomes for rural and township youth: developing a multi-dimensional capabilities-based higher education index (South Africa)

September 2016 to August 2020

Melanie Jane Walker

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE, SOUTH AFRICA.

Aims to develop an integrated, policy-oriented theorisation of pathways to learning outcomes that emphasises equality and quality for young people from rural areas and townships. Focuses on preparing for university, their experiences at university, and graduate outcomes in order to understand what enables the transformative potential of Higher Education.

Insecurity and uncertainty: marginalised young people's living rights in fragile and conflict affected situations in Nepal and Ethiopia (Ethiopia, Nepal)

July 2016 to June 2019

Vicky Johnson

BRIGHTON UNVERSITY, UK

This research will generate new knowledge about youth understandings of uncertainty, violence, poverty and rights and provide insights into how to support and sustain pathways out of poverty for street connected and marginalised young people.

Inter-agency research on strengthening community based child protection for vulnerable children in Sierra Leone (Sierra Leone)

January 2013 to December 2015
Michael Wessells
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, USA

To help strengthen the evidence base on child protection, this ethically approved research tested the effectiveness of community-designed interventions for linking community child protection mechanisms with government-led health and social welfare aspects of the national child protection system.

Menstruation and the cycle of poverty: does the provision of sanitary pads improve the attendance and educational outcomes of girls in school? (Uganda)

October 2013 to December 2014
Catherine Dolan
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES, UK

Findings from the analysis to date indicated that the provision of puberty education and sanitary pads to girls living in contexts of poverty can improve school attendance rates.

Multidimensional poverty: enriching methodologies of measurement and policy analysis (Global)

July 2011 to June 2014
Sabina Alkire
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, UK

This research developed new methodologies related to multidimensional poverty measurement and analysis corresponding to: weights, trade-offs, and policy incentives in multi-dimensional poverty measures; multidimensional poverty dynamics; and multidimensional poverty and welfare economics.

ODFL systems to increase education access and attainment for young people in high HIV prevalence SADC countries (Lesotho, Malawi)

April 2007 to July 2010
Pat Judith Pridmore
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, UK

This study aimed to increase access to education and learning for young people living in high HIV prevalence areas in Malawi and Lesotho, by developing a new, more flexible model of education that used open, distance and flexible learning (ODFL) to complement and enrich conventional schooling.

Pedagogies for critical thinking: innovation and outcomes in African higher education

(Botswana, Ghana, Kenya)

April 2015 to March 2018

Tristan McCowan

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON, UK

Aims to expand the existing evidence base around how pedagogical practices affect the development of critical thinking at African higher education institutions by investigating the impact of locally-generated pedagogical interventions on student critical thinking ability in Kenya, Ghana and Botswana.

Poverty and maternal health in Ghana: a spatial analysis of exclusion from care

(Ghana)

July 2008 to January 2011

Zoe Matthews

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON, UK

By investigating factors related to physical accessibility and availability of health services, the research facilitated an understanding of the effect of poverty on patterns of spatial variation in service use. The results provided policymakers with spatially explicit explanations for exclusion from care throughout Ghana through nationwide maps of causative factors.

Promoting children's learning outcomes in conflict-affected countries: generating, communicating, and incorporating evidence for impact

(Democratic Republic of Congo)

April 2015 to April 2016

John Lawrence Aber

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, USA

Aimed to generate, communicate, and incorporate into practice rigorous evidence as to how to promote effective teaching and improve children's academic and socioemotional learning in conflict-affected contexts.

Social cash transfers, generational relations and youth poverty trajectories in rural Lesotho and Malawi

(Lesotho, Malawi)

October 2015 to September 2018

Nicola Ansell

BRUNEL UNIVERSITY, UK

Explores the factors that shape the pathways into and out of poverty, and people's experience of these, and examines how policy can create sustained routes out of extreme poverty in ways that can be replicated and scaled up. Contrasts social cash transfers (SCTs) in two countries in the past decade: Lesotho (social pensions and child grants) and Malawi (SCTs to ultra-poor labour constrained households).

Socio-economic inequalities and the MDGs: building evidence to support equitable improvement in maternal and newborn health in Asia & Africa

(Bangladesh, India, Malawi, Nepal)

July 2011 to September 2015

Antonia Jannetje (Tanja) Houweling

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON, UK

The project explored evidence on: how socio-economic inequalities translate

Schoolgirl,
Kenya

into inequalities in newborn and maternal mortality; how to address the exclusion of poor and otherwise disadvantaged groups from efforts to achieve the MDGs; and how to reduce socio-economic inequalities in maternal and newborn mortality.

Student performance in national examinations: the dynamics of language in school achievement (Tanzania)

July 2007 to December 2010
Pauline Rea-Dickins
UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL, UK

This project focused on three curriculum areas (Science, Mathematics and English) and aimed to: develop insights into the extent to which language factors contributed to poor examination achievement, and identify factors that raised the quality of examining processes, thereby enhancing students' potential to demonstrate fully their conceptual understandings.

Succeeding against the odds: understanding resilience and exceptionalism in high-functioning township and rural primary schools in South Africa (South Africa)

May 2016 to November 2018.
Servaas Van Der Berg
STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY, SOUTH AFRICA

Aims to understand resilience and exceptionalism in high-functioning townships and rural primary schools in South Africa. Uses rigorous quantitative analysis to determine whether or not new measures of school leadership and management (SLM) practices, and behaviours, are systematically related, and seeks to understand their predictive or explanatory power.

The identification and nurturing of high ability students in the slums of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania (Tanzania)

December 2013 to June 2015
Pauline Dixon
NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY, UK

Focused on the current identification process for high ability children attending schools in the slums of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The identification process were observed to find out whether this was biased towards particular gender or cultural norms.

The impact of mobile phones on young people's lives and life chances in sub-Saharan Africa: a three country study to inform policy and practice (Ghana, Malawi, South Africa)

August 2012 to December 2015
Gina Porter
DURHAM UNIVERSITY, UK

Explored how the rapid expansion of mobile phone usage impacts on young lives, and examined how policy makers can support the positive aspects of this change, whilst constraining the negative elements of mobile phone usage.

The literacy laboratory project (LLP) under the Northern Uganda literacy program

(Uganda)

May 2015 to April 2019

Rebecca Thornton

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, USA

This research will collect a rich set of longitudinal data to show that, with the right combination of training, teaching and learning materials, and correct support, teachers can be supported to effectively teach literacy – even in rural, under-resourced, overcrowded classrooms. The study will also explore economic approaches to implementation at scale to determine value-for-money impacts on pupil learning and teacher performance in African schools.

Toward the development of a rigorous and practical classroom observation tool: the Uganda secondary school project

(Uganda)

April 2015 to April 2016

Edward Seidman

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, USA

Capitalised on a large-scale experimental school and classroom-based intervention programme undertaken in Ugandan public secondary schools by the World Bank (WB), in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to explore methods for providing insight on how to effectively facilitate deeper learning. Data from the research provided a unique opportunity to develop and validate an innovative, affordable, scalable, and practical tool for assessing teacher practices and classroom processes.

Transforming the pedagogy of STEM subjects

(Ethiopia)

June 2015 to May 2018.

Per Kind

DURHAM UNIVERSITY, UK

Investigates how pedagogy for STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) subjects in a low income, developing nation, can be transformed from using one-way lecturing and closed teacher questions to dialogical discourse and argumentation, and the effects this generates in improved student learning and attitudes.

Understanding and supporting sustained pathways out of extreme poverty and deprivation

(Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania)

July 2015 to June 2017

Andrew Shepherd

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (ODI), UK

Concentrates on achieving a better understanding of how escapes from extreme poverty and deprivation can be sustained over time. It combines the analysis of quantitative data with a time dimension (panel surveys) with the collection of life histories and face-to-face interviews and groups discussions with policy makers and key informants at the local level.

Understanding the political and institutional conditions for effective poverty reduction for persons with disabilities in Liberia
(Liberia)

April 2014 to March 2017
Maria Kett
LEONARD CHESHIRE DISABILITY, UK

Explores what political and institutional conditions in Liberia are associated with effective poverty reduction and development, and what domestic and external actors can do to promote these conditions. Focuses on the relationship between national and international institutions and actors to understand how the linkages and processes between state and society are benefiting one of the most marginalised populations – persons with disabilities.

Widening participation in higher education in Ghana and Tanzania: developing an equity scorecard
(Ghana, Tanzania)

September 2006 to January 2010
Louise Morley
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX, UK

Investigated interventions for widening participation in one public university and one private university in Ghana and Tanzania. Explored the factors that facilitate or impede participation in higher education, and examined approaches taken by state and private providers to widen participation.

References

1. UNICEF (2016) Ending Extreme Poverty: A Focus on Children, United Nations Children's Fund and World Bank Group, www.unicef.org/publications/index_92826.html (accessed 5 September 2017)

2. UNICEF (2016) The State of the World's Children 2016: A Fair Chance for Every Child, New York: United Nations Children's Fund, www.unicef.org/publications/index_91711.html (accessed 5 September 2017)

3. Eldis (2017) Sharing the Best in Global Development Research for Policy and Practice, www.eldis.org/ (accessed 5 September 2017)

THE IMPACT INITIATIVE

For International Development Research

This booklet provides an overview of research on children and young people encompassing 38 projects focused in 22 countries which have been enabled by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Department for International Development (DFID) Strategic Partnership.

The Impact Initiative for International Development Research seeks to connect policy makers and practitioners with the world class social science research supported by the ESRC-DFID Strategic Partnership, maximising the uptake and impact of research from: (i) The Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research, and (ii) The Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Programmes. We seek to identify synergies between these programmes and their grant holders, support them to exploit influencing and engagement opportunities, and facilitate mutual learning.

The Impact Initiative is a collaboration between the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and the University of Cambridge's Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre.

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