

# **Abstract for ADB Seminar on Social Protection for the Poor in Asia & Latin America, Oct.21-25<sup>th</sup>, 2002.**

## **CHILD PROTECTION: A central and integral component in Poverty Reduction.<sup>1</sup>**

**“For us, the children, we are not the future, we are the present”**

**Nicole Bidedain**

**(child delegate at PrepCom in New York, 11<sup>th</sup> June, 2001)**

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**The theme of this paper is that the adoption of Child Protection as a central and integral component in the policies and programmes of the ADB, if carried out with the participation of children and those adults and organisations working for children’s rights, would have a long-standing, beneficial and sustainable impact on poverty reduction in Asia and the Pacific. Children who are healthy, educated, have a sense of their own worth and are supported are likely to be a major driving force behind economic growth, poverty reduction and a fairer and more inclusive world.**

This paper appreciates the ADB’s recently adopted overarching poverty reduction strategy and the emphasis on child protection within the social protection aspect of that strategy. It refers to the positives that have come from this development. It also acknowledges the expanded cooperation initiative the ADB has made with the NGO sector since 1998 and the setting up of the NGO Centre in Manila and the NGO Cooperation Action Plan. It is clear that the ADB is aware of the plight of many of Asia’s children. The ADB’s President Tadao Chino has stated “It is the vulnerable, especially women and children, who bear the brunt of poverty”. The Bank’s inclusion of child protection as one of the five elements in its Social Protection Strategy is a major step forward. The ‘Develop a Child Initiative’ emphasises through its many publications that

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<sup>1</sup> *The views expressed in this paper are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), or its Board of Directors or the governments they represent. ADB makes no representation concerning and does not guarantee the source, originality, accuracy, completeness or reliability of any statement, information, data, finding, interpretation, advice, opinion, or view presented.*

the needs of children are understood. 'The Special Theme: Develop a Child' shows that the ADB has analysed some of the major needs and its current investments in this area. It ends that article with a call to action. "The cost of helping children reach their potential is not small but the cost of not helping them is far greater. Develop a child, develop a nation". Despite this obvious commitment to assist children, especially the vulnerable, this paper asks how much this has actually changed the way the ADB works. It notes that according to the ADB's own publication that the ADB's investments in education, health and nutrition come to only 8% of total lending since 1990. It questions how easy it is for the ADB as an IFI to give up the deeply held economic beliefs of economic growth as the sole stimulant in poverty reduction?

This paper looks briefly at issues surrounding globalisation and children's rights, PRSPs, liberalisation, deregulation, transparency, privatisation, the lack of regulation of MNCs and the degree of participatory approaches used, drawing examples primarily from the Asian context. It outlines what SCUK would wish to see change by looking at poverty reduction through a child rights lens.

The paper describes some of the critical issues that the UN adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child brought to the forefront concerning the rights, status and role of children within society. It looks at the impact of all children being rights-holders and States Parties being accountable for these rights being met – 'States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind' (Art. 2.1). It points to the changing attitudes both of children and towards children since then, particularly with regard to their participation in matters that effect them. It looks at what Save the Children UK has set as goals for protecting children's rights and enhancing poverty reduction. It asks whether the ADB can look more closely at these issues in a proactive stand for child protection.

It discusses the various meanings given to Child Protection, why it is so important and who it concerns. It looks at those groups of children that are most vulnerable and some of the main reasons for this. It raises the minimum standard of 'do no harm' to children and ways this can be assured.

This paper finally explores how the ADB can better through its policies and programmes ensure the protection of children and make their survival and development a core aim and underlying principle in its interventions for poverty reduction.

- It refers back to how it should ensure that macroeconomic policies 'do no harm' to the most vulnerable and that private sector dealings are transparent.
- It emphasises that policies should concentrate on the needs of the poorest, ie those who are exposed to harm, unable to access quality primary school education, affordable health services, clean water and sanitation, rather than to richer households.

- It emphasises the importance within country poverty assessments of a situational analysis of the problems children face and their recommendations to resolve them through an organised process of listening to children from the poorest communities and those adults working with and for them.
- It recommends that the ADB collaborates with weak Ministries like Labour & Social Welfare and other Ministries that have a responsibility for child protection, so they work together to protect children and jointly advocate for the allocation of money to the poorest children from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.
- It stresses the need for government and civil society to monitor at least annually how much of the country's budget is allocated towards meeting children's rights and raising the standards of the poorest and most marginalised children as indicated by assessments, eg girls, out-of-school children, the disabled, migrants, remote communities, ethnic minorities, child labourers, HIV/AIDS affected, etc.
- It encourages the establishing of an open system for monitoring programmes and complaints, which involve beneficiaries.
- It looks at how especially vulnerable groups could best be protected and assisted through ADB investments.
- It enquires whether the ADB would be willing to fund research on child violence in Asia so as to highlight some of major abuses that need action, which can be fed into the forthcoming UN Study on Violence.
- It suggests ways in which governance can be improved, so that the rights of children as well the Human Rights of all are established in law and enforced.
- It proposes consideration by the ADB of a Child Protection Policy, which it would expect its staff and its partners whether in the private or public sector to adhere to, so as to ensure that children affected by its projects are treated with respect and not abused or exploited.

There is a great amount of agreement about what can be achieved through placing Child Protection centrally and integrally in all poverty reduction policies and programmes. What this comes down to is that the rights of children should be mainstreamed in the development process. By working to provide all children with their basic rights to protection from all manner of abuses, to health, education, nutrition, water, participation and a livelihood the ADB will be making an increasingly significant contribution in reducing poverty. The imperative is to ensure that all stakeholders have the will to make it happen.

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