

Institute for International Economic Policy (IIEP) **Poverty: A Brief Overview of IIEP's Work**

IIEP faculty led by Professors James Foster and Stephen Smith are engaged in research and policy analysis on extreme (or ultra-) poverty in the developing world. IIEP's ultra-poverty initiative focuses on basic and applied research, organizing conferences, work with international organizations, and both technical and policy publications. IIEP is well placed to emerge as one of the world's leading centers for scholarship on global poverty with our widely cited research and high-quality events building to a major international conference in spring 2012.

Our overarching theme is multidimensional measurement and analysis of poverty and poverty programs. James Foster's influential work on multidimensional measurement provides the underpinnings of the new UNDP Multidimensional Poverty Index; Professor Foster is applying this work to measurement in several fields including educational quality, women's wellbeing, health, nutrition, and corruption. In addition, IIEP faculty are working on design and impact of multidimensional poverty programs, multidimensional screening of poverty program eligibility, and multidimensional poverty traps analysis. Foster and Smith are developing rigorous measurement and application of a popular and intuitive but thus far vague definition of extreme poverty as "poverty that kills." Foster is working on analysis of quality of education and poverty outcomes; Foster is examining information technology and poverty; Smith is developing and implementing econometric techniques for research on poverty traps and introducing multidimensional and interlocking traps into this literature; Paul Carrillo is studying poverty programs and strategies in Ecuador; Sarah Baird is conducting randomized control trials on health and poverty interventions in Africa. Faculty are also examining implications of this work for the post-2015 successor to the Millennium Development Goals.

IIEP is organizing a major two-day conference on the economics of ultra-poverty for March 22 and 23, 2012. As outcomes of the event, we plan a special issue of a research journal and an edited book. The conference will include participants from research institutions, international agencies and developing country governments. Key topics include: measurement of ultra-poverty; incidence of ultra-poverty; poverty traps; effects of growth and conflict; impacts of environmental and resource problems on ultra-poverty; relationships between ultra-poverty and extreme inequality; nutrition and ultra-poverty; and design and evaluation of programs and policies to remedy ultra-poverty.

In the run-up to the March conference we are hosting a series of events examining some of the key topics. Most prominently, on Sept. 30, 2011, IIEP hosted the "Forum on Food Price Increases: Causes, Impacts and Responses," which featured leading experts presenting research and policy analysis on the recent spikes in food prices, and on the long-term food price, availability and security outlook.

High-priority research areas for IIEP that could be greatly leveraged or made possible by further support include: measuring and identifying quality of education among the poor; new poverty reduction applications of information and communication technology (ICT), including the role of cell phones in microfinance; the role of village networks in design of poverty reduction strategies; forecasting poverty utilizing new survey technologies; identification of

multidimensional poverty traps; roles of education in development outcomes beyond income; and new techniques for evaluating programs targeted at the poorest of the poor.