

# From Social Protection to Social Capital of Children in Poverty: An Argument for Cross-Class Policy Design and Implementation



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Child Poverty and Social Protection Conference  
10–11 September 2013

# Outline

1. Core Idea
2. Theoretical Framework
3. Empirical Insights
4. Policy Perspectives



# 1. Core Idea

- Cross-Class Design of Social Protection Policies and Interventions for children in poverty
- For child-focused social protection policies to truly become a transformative force for social inclusion and social mobility, such policies should be purposively conceived in conjunction with the education and developmental imperatives of children from more privileged backgrounds
- Deprivation (& social protection) is 'relational'



## 2. Theoretical Framework: Definition

- **Social Capital:** “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 248)
  - distinct from the communitarian model
  - power > dominant norms > differentiated socialization > social reproduction



## 2. Theoretical Framework: 3R Model

- **Relationships** : networks that children build among themselves, and with external stakeholders (broadly defined) through formal and informal contexts, processes and protocols. (networks are differentiated)
- **Resources**: resources of 'others', or the 'second-order' resources that are potentially available to the 'ego'. (simply being in a network is not enough; it is important to be in a resource-rich network)
- **Readiness**: socially constructed and contextually defined critical skills that enables one to be effective in identifying, nurturing, and mobilizing relational resources. (akin to cultural capital; "sociability")



# 3. Intervention: Hidden Domestic Child Labor

- Context: urban India (city of Calcutta / Kolkata)
- Site: Loreto Sealdah School – all girls, private (catering to middle class), English medium, Catholic .
- **Intervention: Hidden Domestic Child Labor program**
  - School children identify domestic child laborers in their neighborhoods, and bring them out to play
  - Subsequently the domestic child laborers are encouraged to attend non-formal education centers
- A program whose real strength is derived from its unique design connecting privileged middle class children with the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable children and adolescents. It is this link that makes the rest of the traditional social protection value chain - drop-in center, non-formal education, social worker cum literacy trainer – applicable and relevant.
- The program mobilizes a social awareness campaign, through middle class children’s unique agency, that makes it socially unacceptable for adults to tolerate child laborers in their homes and neighborhoods.



### 3. Empirical Insights: The Rainbow Program

- **Intervention: Rainbow program.**
  - School is a shelter for former street children – Rainbows.
  - The Loreto students ‘teach’ the Rainbow kids daily as part of their regular school activity.
  - The Rainbow kids attend Bengali /Hindi medium schools
- Research Question: How the multi-year interaction of Loreto students with the Rainbow children affects the attitudes and values of the former?
- ‘How are you different from the girls that you teach in the Rainbow Program?’
  - “We are all equal, but the difference is that we are getting better opportunities than them” (10th grade).
  - “We are same, as they need help, we just teach them. After some day, they will be like us only teaching others” (9th grade).



### 3. Empirical Insights: The Rainbow Program (cont'd)

- ‘Have the Rainbow Children taught you anything?’ Then, the follow-up question asked: ‘If you answered yes to the question above, please share what the Rainbow Children have taught you.’
  - “I have got an idea that there are children in adverse situations who are fighting back and coping with the situation. Seeing them my own problems seem small” (9th grade)
  - “They taught us how to face problems in life. How to stay without parents, leading life alone, sacrifice every wish and how to cooperate with others and respect elders. To stand in life” (10th grade).



### 3. Framing in 3R-s of Social Capital

- Relationship: provides an authentic context for participation - socialization opportunities to form new and abiding relationships beyond traditional social boundaries
- Resources: physical wellbeing (Rainbow, HDCL); psycho-social (all children)
- Readiness: Critical awareness of agency, new repertoire of skills



## 4. Policy Perspectives

- Design as a purpose (intentional)
- Organizational culture (leadership, hands-on compassion, inclusion)
- Agency and evolving identity of children (hence cross-class design uniquely suitable for child-focused interventions)
- Particularly appropriate in urban context (intra-urban inequalities)



## 4. Policy Perspectives

- Integrate social protection policies for children in poverty with authentic engagement opportunities for non-poor children and adolescents. The key is to move beyond the dialectic of benefactor-beneficiary, and instead champion the universality of rights and interdependencies of all members of the society
- Scaffold the engagement in a developmentally appropriate discourse of children's rights
- Prioritize urban contexts and intra-urban inequality
- Embed such policies in institutional contexts that are normative “sites” for children and adolescents – school, sports, culture, and so forth.
- Align differentiated incentive structures to bring together young people with differences in identities and aspirations.



# Thank You!

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