

World poverty

There is a growing consensus that, in a world that is 'rich' in terms of material resources and technical knowledge, it is unacceptable that over one billion people live in extreme poverty. New ideas and knowledge, emanating from new approaches to poverty research, are urgently needed to develop the world's understanding of the dynamics of poverty and to aid the development and improvement of strategies and processes to combat it.

In more recent times The University of Manchester has established itself as one of the leading European centres for research on poverty and economic development. Its internationally recognised Institute for Development Policy and Management, the UK's largest university-based International Development Studies unit, houses 40 researchers all with a specific interest in economic, social and cultural development in developing countries.

The University has extended its reputation for policy relevant research through the work of its Chronic Poverty Research Centre, Global Poverty Research Group and research by academics in the School of Environment and Development, and the School of Social Sciences (awarded the top 5* rating in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise). These activities entail major research partnerships with universities and research institutes in the UK, Bangladesh, India, South Africa, Uganda and West Africa. They have been supported by major grants from the Economic and Social Research Council and the Department for International Development's largest single investment in social science research. In recent years findings from University of Manchester researchers have influenced the Commission for Africa, bilateral and multilateral development agencies and African and Asian governments.

The creation in February 2006 at The University of Manchester of the world's first global poverty research centre, the Brooks World Poverty Institute (BWPI), - facilitated by a £1.3 million gift from UK-based Manchester alumnus Rory Brooks and his wife Elizabeth - signals the University's progression from being a major international research centre on poverty and well-being to being the leading institution in Europe.

The aim of the BWPI is to influence the global poverty policy agenda, identifying obstacles to progress, and to disseminate new, more direct and cost-effective methods of ameliorating the lot of the world's chronically poor. It also aims to make full use of up-to-date technology such as mobile phones. To achieve this BWPI has been cross-disciplinary from the outset, including anthropologists, economists, human geographers, political scientists, sociologists and others in its work.

An early example of this cross-disciplinary research is the BWPI programme on Finance and Poverty. Only a minority of the world's poor have access to formal financial service such as loans, insurance, wire transfers, and savings accounts. The goal of the Brooks programme is to identify new and innovative financial products and services and make these far more available so that the world's poorest communities, in both the developed and developing world, can survive economic setbacks, build savings, and improve the health and education of their children.

The University has engaged Nobel Laureate Professor Joseph Stiglitz (recently recruited from Columbia and the World Bank) as Chair of the Strategy Board for the BWPI. Professor Tony Addison, formerly of the United Nations University in Helsinki, has joined as Executive Director, while Michael Woolcock of Harvard and the World Bank has been appointed as Research Director.