

Childhood Poverty in South Asia: A case study of Rajasthan

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The concept of childhood poverty focuses on the major deprivations which children face in childhood, especially in terms of health and nutrition, education and work. Childhood experiences deeply condition capabilities acquired during adulthood. Children who do not have a 'good start' in life are likely to be more deprived in the later stages of their lives. Therefore, children and childhood have become a focus of policy-making.

In Rajasthan, the relationship between childhood poverty, livelihoods and well-being is influenced by the status and conditions of children, as well as by their growth, socialization, cultural practices, belief systems, community linkages and social relations. While attitudes towards children and experiences of childhood vary significantly by caste, class, religion, gender, ethnicity and regional location. Lives of all children born into poverty can be exceptionally vulnerable because they face inequalities in access to crucial resources (health, nutrition and education) leading to further exclusion and marginalization.

This study was carried out in Ajmer district of Rajasthan primarily to examine childhood poverty and the mechanisms that lead to transmission of poverty over a life course and between generations. Multiple vulnerabilities rather than a single set of factors contribute to intergenerational transfers of poverty. Main focus on poor nutrition and healthcare; low levels of education; a depleting environment; insecure livelihoods; indebtedness; and cultural norms and social practices. Disrupting negative poverty cycles necessitates a policy environment that provides potential opportunities for people to escape intergenerational and life-course poverty.

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