

Townsend, P., Gordon, D. (eds) (2002), *World Poverty: New Policies to Defeat an Old Enemy*, Bristol: Polity.

"I am often asked what is the most serious form of human rights violation in the world today and my reply is consistent: extreme poverty" (p. xi, quoting Mary Robinson in 2002).

The contrast between 'absolute' and 'relative' poverty has been replaced by a 1995 UN agreement to have two definitions of poverty: 'absolute and overall poverty' (p. 59), with the former being 'a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to services' (p. 59, quoting the UN). Overall poverty can 'take various forms, including ... lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterised by lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life. It occurs in all countries as mass poverty in many developing countries, pockets of poverty amid wealth in developed countries, loss of livelihoods as a result of economic recession, sudden poverty as a result of disaster or conflict, the poverty of low-wage workers, and the utter destitution of people who fall outside family support systems, social institutions and safety nets' (p. 59, quoting the UN).

Table on p. 70 of 'operational definitions of deprivation for children', going from mild, through moderate, severe, to extreme. For food, going from 'bland diet of poor nutritional value', 'going hungry on occasion', 'malnutrition' and 'starvation'. For education, 'inadequate teaching due to lack of resources', 'unable to attend secondary but can attend primary education', 'child is seven years of age or older and has received no primary or secondary education', to 'prevented from learning due to persecution and prejudice'.

The conclusion is not encouraging. 'The analysis in these chapters of trends in world living standards has led to a disturbing conclusion: mass poverty is set to persist and, worse still, to increase' (p. 413).

Townsend and Gordon have their own proposed 'index of material and social deprivation' (p. 437-442), for the UK and cross-national, including (on p. 442):

UK	Cross-national
Educational deprivation	Educational deprivation
1 Fewer than ten years of education (people under 60 years of age)	1 Fewer than ten years of education (adults aged 18-60 years of age)
2 No formal qualifications from school or subsequent educational courses or apprenticeships	2 Fewer than five years education (people 15+ years)
	3 No formal qualifications from school or subsequent educational courses or apprenticeships
	4 Cannot read or write/has great difficulty reading/writing
	5 No school books for children
	6 No dictionary in school
	7 Child absent/withdrawn from school because of insufficient parental resources
	8 Newspapers not regularly available for family members