

**Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty
reduction strategies in light of economic crisis**

An initial examination of Cyprus

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	2
2. CONTEXT & BACKGROUND	3
2.1. The ‘Paternal’ State.....	3
2.2. South vs. West: closing the gap?	4
2.3. The IMF feeds the PI(I)GS	5
2.3.1 <i>IMF and its discontents</i>	7
2.4. A thorn in the side of Cyprus	8
3. SECTORS OF INTERVENTION	13
3.1. Food security.....	15
3.2. Labour/Employment	16
3.3. Education	17
3.4. Cross-cutting issues.....	18
3.5. Recommendations for intervention programmes	21
4. CONCLUSION.....	23
5. REFERENCES	24
ANNEX 1: Overview of Recent Initiatives.....	27

1. Introduction

“Children living in poverty are those who experience deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal members of society.”

– UNICEF, *The State of the World’s Children (2005)*, p.18

Child poverty is a worldwide phenomenon; there is no country which does not experience it, but its levels vary. Poverty itself is not a clear-cut subject, with its two main strands absolute/extreme and relative and the myriad of factors influencing, augmenting or decreasing its risk. While extreme poverty refers to “a severe deprivation of basic human needs”¹, the relative concept, relevant to this study has been identified when “... people are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live. Because of their poverty they may experience multiple disadvantages through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation. They are often excluded and marginalized from participating in activities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people and their access to fundamental rights may be restricted”².

When it comes to poverty affecting children specifically then it has been argued that it “should be tackled not measured”³ directly at its three main pillars; deprivation, exclusion and vulnerability⁴. These thematic areas are ungraspable by the mere monetary-oriented GDP⁵, which was acknowledged and became a rationale in developing the Human Development Index

¹ World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 1995, www.un.org/esa/socdev/wssd/text-version/agreements/poach2.htm

² A definition agreed by the European Council in 1975; Eurostat, *Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion: A statistical portrait of the European Union 2010*, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-EP-09-001/EN/KS-EP-09-001-EN.PDF, p.6

³ Judith Burns, BBC News Education & Family, ‘Child poverty should be tackled not measured’, www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-21462601

⁴ Childfund, *Understanding Children’s Experience of Poverty: An Introduction to the DEV Framework*, (2005), www.childfund.org/program_documents/

⁵ Gross Domestic Product, in other words, the value of all goods and services produced within a year in a country is often perceived to be a valid reference to a country’s standard of living.

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

(HDI) and later on the specific measurement of child poverty levels, Child Development Index (CDI). CDI was only formulated in 2008 for Save the Children UK and combines three performance measures, education, health and nutrition, to produce a score on a scale of 0 (best) to 100 (worst)⁶. These measures, simplistically, in combination with the aforementioned pillars can make a valid reference on the status quo of child poverty according to the context it operates in, e.g. low deprivation+high nutrition= low risk of child poverty, high vulnerability+high education=medium risk, high exclusion+low health= high risk. However it is not only these sectors that we should cross-examine against social preconditions but a vast array of factors, broadly described as rights, entitlements, on a social, political, economic, and civil level. A rights-based approach therefore to poverty reduction/mitigation would yield more effective and efficient outcomes.

2. Context & Background

2.1. The 'Paternal' State

Children's rights are generally characterised by two divergent schools of thought; Paternalism vs. Liberationists⁷. Paternalists will argue that children lack the ability of rational thought therefore they need adults to make the choices for them according to what they think is in their best interests while liberals support that children have the freedom of choice and according to their age, capacity and maturity level they can exercise their own will. States are inherently paternalistic, as the interventions they carry out are rarely based on the wishes and will of the individual members of society, although presumably serving the interests of society as a collective organ. This paradox augments when States cluster on a European level to create a supranational organisation, operating under an Economic and Monetary Union⁸. How can a

⁶ Save the Children UK, 'Child Index', www.savethechildren.org.uk/childindex

⁷ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 'Children's Rights', <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-children/>

⁸ In June 1988 the European Council confirmed the objective of the progressive realisation of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Cyprus, together with Malta, entered the Euro area on the 1st of January 2008; European Central Bank, www.ecb.int/ecb/history/emu/html/index.en.html

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

political entity like the EU take into account the needs of individuals under diverse national systems, how can it strike a balance between economic growth and the molding of a welfare state, and more importantly how can it ensure that the rights and needs of the most vulnerable will be safeguarded? The following is pertinent and resonates here: “if "terrorism" means the use of violence aimed at civilians in order to induce political change from their government, what is it called when intense economic suffering is imposed on a civilian population in order to induce political change from their government? Can those two tactics be morally distinguished?”⁹

2.2. South vs. West: closing the gap?

Certainly, children living in unfavourable sociopolitical and economic conditions cannot fully exercise their rights. Unfortunately, European countries are far from free of child poverty and minors living in European Union countries are at risk of being deprived of basic resources. Even the most developed countries such as Great Britain, Ireland or Italy have child poverty levels as high as 15%¹⁰. Poverty undermines the quality of life of children, induces malnourishment, lack of education, poor health and living conditions that can ultimately lead to poor psychosocial development or at worst high mortality rates. In the South, intensive agriculture methods, the escalated production and use of biofuels (represented in the food vs. fuel argument), systematic deforestation and land degradation affects the living standards of the world’s poor and amongst them increases the vulnerability of children. In the West, global monitoring bodies document steep increases in youth unemployment (25.3% according to Eurostat), societal problems affecting children as a result of financial problems encountered in family contexts, poor households and in the lack of opportunities for young generations.

Alarmingly, measures taken in European countries to overturn the State’s economic collapse (including high youth unemployment rates, public service cuts, and rises in tuition fees), apart from having negative and disproportionate impacts on the poorest and on youth populations,

⁹ Glenn Greenwald, ‘Iran sanctions now causing food insecurity, mass suffering’, www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/oct/07/iran-sanctions-suffering

¹⁰ UNICEF, “Child Poverty in Perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries), (2007), www.unicef.org/media/files/ChildPovertyReport.pdf, p.5

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

are, at best, ephemeral and do not provide macroeconomic solutions, and, at worst also, increase the detrimental effects to wellbeing faced by young people and children¹¹. In turn, countries suffer from a 'youth brain drain', as young populations flee in an effort to seek employment and a better standard of living abroad. Moreover, phenomena like unpaid jobs on a voluntary/intern basis, often with no prospect of a salaried position, have doomed today's youth to be labeled 'the intern generation'. However, exploitative practices endured by the youth population in the South, particularly through forced and cheap labour, mask the inequality evident in consumer patterns and supply chains throughout the world and polarises human and natural resources. Therefore, while the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) face a greater risk indeed of youth and child poverty arising from the aforementioned causes, this is perpetuated and interlinked with activity in the More Developed Countries (MDCs), where the same fears exist.

In this sense, the South vs West argument, which considers only developing countries to be in need of development interventions and humanitarian aid, becomes increasingly inadequate. The exploitation of natural resources is equated with deprivation of those in the West, 'land-grabbing' in the South is transposed to 'house-grabbing' in the West (notably with evictions and long overdue property debts) while common elements such as unemployment, homelessness, undernourishment, illiteracy and social inequalities are prevalent across the world. Instead of seeking to bridge the gap and ensure basic rights across the continent, the gap is being widened and the core-periphery replicated in the European context with the gradual emergence of a sub-category, the west of the West at the top and the 'developing of the developed' at the bottom.

2.3. The IMF feeds the PI(I)GS

Although this study takes a closer look at the status quo in Cyprus and its contributing factors, it is important to note that the Cypriot case did not occur in isolation, but rather was a sequel of a European wave of capitalist failure and banking collapse. The European single currency

¹¹ Extract derived from a paper addressed to the Cyprus government within the framework of the Presidency of the Council of the EU; Rafaela Camassa for "Hope For Children" UNCRF Policy Centre, "Policy Paper on the Rights of the Child in Europe: Recommendations to the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, available at www.crin.org/docs/Policy%20Paper%20for%20EU%20Presidency%20final.pdf, p.18

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

monetary system has taken its toll feeding from the often mala fide decisions of national leaders and official corruption. 'PI(I)GS' in economics, seemingly a derogatory term, is used to describe the weak economies of Portugal, Ireland and Italy (used interchangeably or jointly), Greece and Spain. Since 2008, the 'PI(I)GS' have received loans for bailout deals with structural adjustment policies being severely criticized by the public. Such policies often take the form of reducing government borrowing, increasing privatization and deregulation, and lately in Cyprus, March-April 2013, a landmark experiment of imposing levies on bank deposits.

Public outrage in Cyprus and in other European countries (notably in PI(I)GS where the experiment could be transposed) led to the rejection of the idea of a general cut in bank savings. Instead, there was an agreement reached allegedly "on the key elements necessary for a future macroeconomic adjustment programme"¹². This entailed the closure of the second largest bank in Cyprus (Laiki Popular Bank) with its remaining good assets and deposits below €100,000 saved and transferred to the biggest bank Bank of Cyprus (BoC), while deposits above €100,000 would be lost according to how much can be recovered from liquidation of the remaining bad assets. The possibility of 'haircut' is still open if deemed necessary later on to reach the requirement for a 9% tier 1 capital ratio. In the meantime, deposits above €100,000 in BoC remain frozen until a recapitalisation has been implemented¹³. This condition, in addition to structural reforms and privatization, has demonstrated its early knock-on effects especially amongst the most vulnerable social strata. Privatisation and prioritisation are two recurring terms in the public domain in Cyprus at the moment; to privatise is to prioritise and vice versa. It will be some time before data demonstrate a radical change in GDP income and quality of life indexes but there are arguments for official recognition of the current state of affairs to secure eligibility for structural funds¹⁴. Notably, small businesses and non-profit organizations are experiencing difficulties in sustaining their future while a large proportion of the public understands IMF compliance measures as negatively affecting the most vulnerable population groups.

¹² Eurogroup Statement on Cyprus, 25th of March 2013,

www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ecofin/136487.pdf

¹³ European Commission, "The Economic Adjustment Programme for Cyprus", Occasional Papers 149, (May 2013),

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/occasional_paper/2013/pdf/ocp149_en.pdf

¹⁴ Cyprus Mail, 'MPs want Cyprus listed as a poor EU country', <http://cyprus-mail.com/mps-want-cyprus-listed-as-a-poor-eu-country/>

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

2.3.1. IMF and its discontents¹⁵

Certainly, the IMF's monophthalmic view of development as equal to GDP growth influences not only policies and measures (which arguably are the result of IMF initiation) but also mentalities and gradually norms in a given society. Since its establishment after the Bretton Woods Conference, there has been a diastrophic shift from the initial aim of reconstructing the world's international payment system after World War II to a global apartheid, as Titus Alexander puts it¹⁶. The IMF is a growing global power and one of the prominent institutions sparking the financial globalization movement, following expansive policies despite public condemnation and dysphoria.

The market-oriented approach of the IMF loaning power has been severely criticized, particularly by countries of South America and especially after Argentina, whose economy deteriorated in 2001, following a strict monetary policy which also caused the Asian crisis of 1997. Some of its main criticisms are its 'free market' and blanket reforms with no country-specific understanding (e.g. Goldman scandal) or country ownership and participation, its neo-liberal ideals, the lack of transparency and accountability and its support of military dictatorships with a long history of human rights violations. The conditionality in programmes has IMF, together with the World Bank, condemned for creating perpetuating debt without any debt cancellation, especially in HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) even though there has been a restructuring of the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) mainly through the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). By insisting on low budget deficits and low inflation while promoting cash-flow projects and structural reforms, IMF policies undermine public health, the environment, eco-systems¹⁷ and access to food, which was noted by Bill Clinton in 2008: "We need the World Bank, the IMF, all the big foundations, and all the governments to admit that, for 30 years, we all blew it, including me when I was president. We were wrong to

¹⁵ Term borrowed from the popular book of Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalisation and Its Discontents*.

¹⁶ Titus Alexander, *Unravelling Global Apartheid: an overview of world politics*, (1996), p. 133.

¹⁷ This was admitted by IMF in a March 2010 staff position report which proposed the setting up of the IMF Green Fund; IMF Staff Position Note, Hugh Bredenkamp and Catherine Pattillo, "Financing the Response to Climate Change", (25 March 2010), www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/spn/2010/spn1006.pdf

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

believe that food was like some other product in international trade, and we all have to go back to a more responsible and sustainable form of agriculture”¹⁸.

Inevitably, IMF and ECB policies conditioning States of the Eurozone prove more and more counterproductive with time, as the notion of the ‘welfare’ state is undermined to focus on ‘financial restructuring’, country after country. Greece, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and now Cyprus. Joseph Stiglitz highlights this indifference to welfare, in relation to developing countries, by stating that the IMF “was not participating in a conspiracy, but it was reflecting the interests and ideology of the Western financial community”¹⁹. The precedent set by the global financial institution appears to be widening with long-term negative impact, often criticized as a new mode of neo-imperialism and geostrategic planning outside, but also within, Europe itself. Following this line of argument, the IMF used these countries as its ‘guinea PI(I)GS’ to establish a new economic order through repeated and replicated shock therapies to the peripheral countries of Europe.

2.4. A thorn in the side of Cyprus

Child poverty of any significant scale in Cyprus is a rather recent but growing phenomenon. The effects of the 2013 banking crisis are expected to be augmented with the gradual implementation of measures imposed by ‘Troika’²⁰. The assessment of the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2012 placed Cyprus 31 out of 187 countries and territories with the HDI value 0.848, although this falls to 0.751 according to the Inequality Adjusted HDI (IHDI)²¹. Although HDI is a valid means to assess the de facto situation, which accounts for additional factors additionally to the Gross National Income (GNI), in the last few years the Multidimensional

¹⁸ Bill Clinton’s speech at United Nations World Food Day, October 16, 2008; United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), ‘Perspectives on Rio +20’,

www.unep.org/environmentalgovernance/PerspectivesonRIO20/HansHerren/tabid/78431/Default.aspx

¹⁹ Justin Robertson, *Power and Politics After Financial Crises: rethinking foreign opportunism in emerging markets*, (2008), p.34

²⁰ A tripartite committee that secures bailout loans, so far for Portugal, Greece, Ireland and Cyprus, consisting of the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

²¹ UNDP, “Human Development Report 2013, The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World, Explanatory note on 2013 HDR composite indices, Cyprus, HDI values and rank changes in the 2013 Human Development Report”, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/images/explanations/CYP.pdf>, p.2-4

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

Poverty Index (MPI) has been introduced. MPI responds to a need to adopt “measures that are not only based on monetary indicators, but on variables that directly reflect the deprivation suffered by households, therefore aiming to extend the concept of poverty and to link it to social exclusion”²², which is very relevant in a European Union context. Data and statistics available for Cyprus derived from the UNDP database refer mostly to HDI levels.

TABLE A: Cyprus’s Human Development Index (HDI) for 2012 based on consistent time series data, new component indicators and new methodology²³

	Life expectancy at birth	Expected years of schooling	Mean years of schooling	GNI per capita (2005 PPP\$)	HDI value
2012	79.8	14.9	9.8	23,825	0.848

TABLE B: Cyprus’s Inequality adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) for 2012²⁴

IHDV Value	Overall Loss (%)	Loss due to inequality in life expectancy at birth (%)	Loss due to inequality in education (%)	Loss due to inequality in income (%)
0.751	11.5	4.1	16.3	13.6

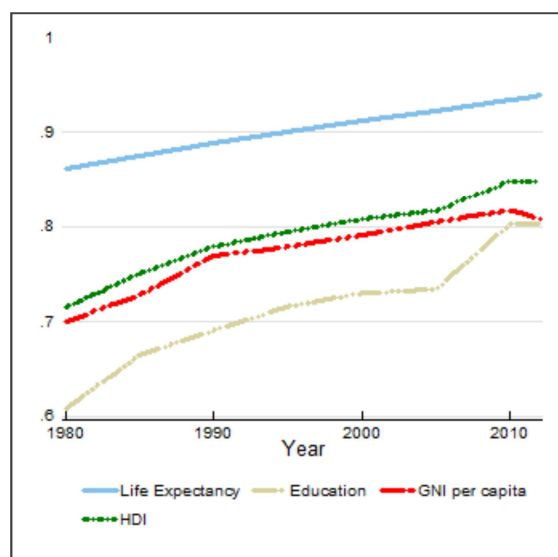
²² Instituto Nacional de Estadística, “Poverty and its measurement: The presentation of a range of methods to obtain measures of poverty”, www.ine.es/en/daco/daco42/sociales/pobreza_en.pdf, p.24

²³ UNDP, Op. cit., p.2

²⁴ UNDP, Op. cit., p.4

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

Figure 1: Trends in Cyprus's Human Development Index (HDI) 1980-2012²⁵



Until recently, the population group most at risk of living below the poverty line in Cyprus were pensioners. Back in 2007, Panos Pashardes noted that overall child poverty levels were low and in relation to the EU average but he supported the view that “the Cyprus government needs to raise the level of child support throughout the benefit system and change the eligibility criteria of the supplementary child benefit to improve targeting” (See also Figure 3) in order for such low levels to be maintained²⁶. Taking into account the interdependency of child poverty and poverty attributed to a specific social group, if a population group is facing high risks of poverty then the children’s risk will be enlarged. Cyprus was employed as an example for this argument given that “the risk of poverty among the elderly is the highest of all Member States”²⁷.

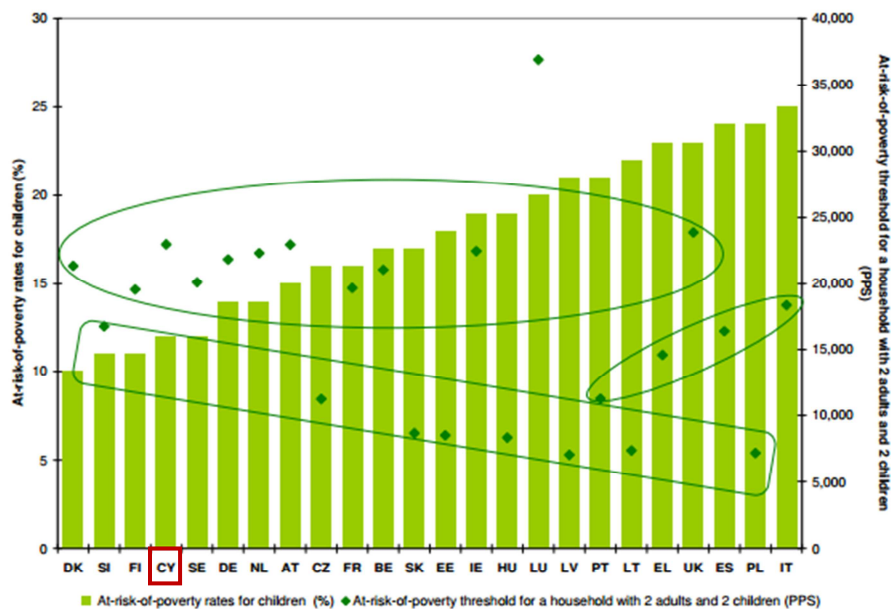
²⁵ Source: UNDP, Op. Cit., p.3

²⁶ Panos Pashardes, “Why Child Poverty in Cyprus is so Low”, Cyprus Economic Policy Review, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 3-16 1450-4561, (2007), www.ucy.ac.cy/data/ecorece/Full%20Text_Pashardes.pdf, p.3

²⁷ TÁRKI Social Research Institute and Applica, “Child poverty and child well-being in the European Union Report for the European Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Unit E.2, Volume I: Main report”, (January 2010), www.tarki.hu/en/research/childpoverty/report/child_poverty_final%20report_jan2010.pdf, p.24

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

Figure 2: At risk of poverty rate for children (% of all children) and at risk of poverty threshold (illustrative values) for a household with two adults and two children (PPS), EU27, 2007²⁸



Source: EUROSTAT.

Notes: The at-risk-of-poverty rate has been calculated as 60% of national equivalised median income.

The households which rank at the top three for increased risk in child poverty are those of a single parent, large families (See Figure 2), and where the one or both of the parents/carers are unemployed. Therefore, apart from material wealth “there is also another group of resources that can influence a household's situation... for example education, the support of family or friends, access to credit, etc”²⁹. Unemployment is seen as the precursor and corollary of social exclusion and poverty as families unable to sustain their households reduce their needs to meet basic livelihood conditions. Education was found to play a role in poverty risk levels which are higher when the parent(s)/carer(s) of a household has (have) a low literacy level; poverty risk reaches 33.5% when parents have a low level of education, to 14.8% when they have a medium

²⁸ Source: Ibid, p.25

²⁹ Instituto Nacional de Estadística, “Poverty and its measurement: The presentation of a range of methods to obtain measures of poverty”, p.24, www.ine.es/en/daco/daco42/sociales/pobreza_en.pdf

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

level of education and 4.3% with a high level of education³⁰. Indeed, “older single persons or couples, mono-parental families, households headed by a non-employed person or low educated persons face higher risk of poverty than the rest of the population”³¹.

Figure 3: Poverty decomposition analysis³²

Household type	Population share	Value of the index	Contribution to poverty		Difference in risk of poverty	
			Post-benefit distribution	Pre-benefit distribution		
Older single persons or couples	12.4	0.34	30.29	0.32	24.25	0.02
Younger single persons or couples	13.4	0.12	11.05	0.11	8.88	0.01
Couple with children up to 18	48.5	0.11	38.78	0.15	44.69	-0.04
Mono-parental household	3.2	0.26	5.94	0.42	8.11	-0.15
Other household types	22.5	0.09	13.95	0.10	14.08	-0.01
<i>Socioeconomic group of HH head</i>						
Blue collar worker	35.6	0.06	14.42	0.06	13.78	-0.01
White collar worker	27.0	0.11	21.69	0.15	24.61	-0.04
Self-employed	9.0	0.10	6.51	0.15	8.31	-0.05
Unemployed	8.5	0.24	14.33	0.31	15.85	-0.07
Pensioner	17.3	0.30	36.95	0.28	30.03	0.02
Other	2.6	0.33	6.10	0.47	7.43	-0.14
<i>Educational level of HH head</i>						
Primary education	21.9	0.28	43.99	0.31	41.76	-0.03
Secondary education	51.0	0.12	44.82	0.16	48.64	-0.03
Tertiary education	27.1	0.06	11.20	0.06	9.61	0.00
<i>Age of population member</i>						
Below 18	22.9	0.12	20.08	0.18	24.77	-0.05
18-64	64.7	0.11	51.64	0.13	52.45	-0.02
Over 64	12.4	0.32	28.28	0.30	22.77	0.02
All		0.141		0.16		

The social exclusion of children is interdependent with multiple discrimination which affects vulnerable sections of the specific age group. This was addressed through a National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (NSPSI) between 2008-2010³³ in the framework of 2010 being designated by the European Union a year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Linked to the core discrepancies in access, availability and adequacy in terms of welfare provisions, exclusion and marginalization can deepen and further the destructive tentacles of poverty. Discrimination is not only encountered on a social level but is often

³⁰ Famagusta Gazette, “Cyprus ranks first in Eurozone as regards poverty risk for elderly”, <http://famagusta-gazette.com/cyprus-ranks-first-in-eurozone-as-regards-poverty-risk-for-elderly-p18324-69.htm>

³¹ Christos Koutsampelas, “Social Transfers and Income Distribution in Cyprus”, Economics Research Centre, University of Cyprus, Cyprus Economic Policy Review, , Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 35-55 (2011) 1450-4561, www.ucy.ac.cy/data/ecorece/KOUTSAMPELAS_35-55.pdf, p.51

³² Source: Ibid, p.52

³³ The report is available in Greek and English at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?type=3&policyArea=0&subCategory=0&country=0&year=0&advSearchKey=nsr+spsi&mode=advancedSubmit&langId=en>

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

embedded in cultural and, more worryingly, institutional norms. Economic and social barriers and exclusion are interdependent as they form integral parts of the same vicious circle.

Lately, predictions point towards a 'violent adjustment' to a more impoverished structure for the Cypriot society due to a forecasted radical drop of 20% in GDP during the forthcoming 6 months. The GDP growth rate during the fourth quarter of 2012 was negative and "estimated at -3,4% over the corresponding quarter of 2011"³⁴. A rather obscured contributing factor to the reduction of income is the dramatic fall of the national average wage whilst living costs remain steadily high. Such a rapid reduction and loss in income as observed lately in Cyprus, could be described as one of Klein's orchestrated 'shocks'³⁵; unexpected and alarming for the mass population. Following Pashardes' recommendation, the state needs to shape welfare provisions in order to fit a macroeconomic adjustment that would, nonetheless, place emphasis and paramount importance on social inclusion and anti-poverty strategies, assess needs and determine solutions to avoid growing child poverty levels in such a way that is sustainable. Similarly, interventions drawn up by stakeholders need to take into account multi-dimensional approaches to poverty according to a ground needs assessment and seam together a multifaceted response to it.

3. Sectors of Intervention

The following is an analysis of what are deemed the most crucial sectors of intervention at the present in Cyprus; food security, labour/employment, education and cross-cutting issues. However, the following suggestions and sectors are in no way to be considered exhaustive in tackling the rise of child poverty within the Cypriot context.

³⁴ Statistical Service of Cyprus (CYSTAT), "Latest Figures: GDP Growth Rate", 4th Quarter 2012, www.cystat.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/7F691CFF03786EC9C2257AC60038D90A

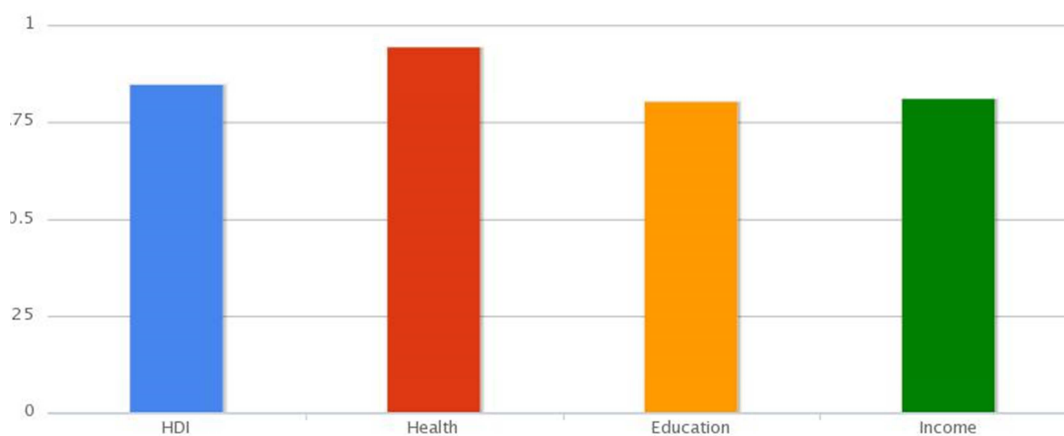
³⁵ Term borrowed from Naomi Klein's book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, (2007)

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus



The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) form an example of certain sectors of intervention which require additional attention for a multi-dimensional approach to development. However, they have been heavily criticized for addressing these sectors with mere calculations and quantitative indicators whilst at once engaging the target populations and developing countries in no form of participation.

Figure 4: Human Development Index for Cyprus: Health, Education and Income³⁶



³⁶ Source: UNDP, 'International Human Development Indicators-Cyprus', <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CYP.html>

3.1. Food security

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, “food security exists when all people at all times, have physical, social and economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious food in a good condition to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active healthy life”³⁷. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) sets out the responsibility of States to provide families with food where they do not have the capacity to do so, in order to ensure an adequate standard of living (Article 27) and makes reference to the importance of nutritious food for a child’s health (Art.24).

While in the past the agriculture industry was one of the main occupations on the island of Cyprus, increasing levels of literacy led to more people seeking professionally-skilled employment. As well as this, the main issue faced by farmers is water scarcity which plagues both land and crops. These two factors, contribute to the steadily increasing number of imports which exacerbate the instability of sustainable domestic production. In November 2012, food security and nutrition were addressed in a Global Symposium in Nicosia, Cyprus within the post-2015 development framework and the Beyond2015 Campaign. Although the Symposium focused on measures for developing countries it raised these issues in the public domain and elevated food security to the forefront³⁸.

Food security is evidently a crucial sector against which degrees of vulnerability and risk to being exposed to poor living conditions ought to be measured. While reducing the degree of harm, coping strategies need to be established to ensure food access, availability, quality and cultural appropriateness, which often stems from socio-economic factors related to assets and income. After March 2013, Cyprus has witnessed a burst of new models of supply in relation to food and items of primary need. Communal markets are busier than ever before, one-off events seek to

³⁷ Food and Agriculture Organisation, ‘World Food Summit of 1996, Rome Declaration on World Food Security’, www.fao.org/docrep/003/w3613e/w3613e00.HTM

³⁸ CYINDEP, ‘The World We Want – Global Civil Society Symposium: Food Security And Nutrition In the Post-2015 Framework’, www.beyond2015.org/world-we-want-%E2%80%93-global-civil-society-symposium

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

boost the delivery of food products to families in need and organizations, media and the corporate world build synergies for the same purpose (See Annex 1). A notable project by the Cooperative group 'Utopia Collectiva' was the use of a public space with unrestricted access to set up a collective vegetable garden, named 'Collective Bahce'³⁹, maintained and used by the surrounding area. In this way, interventions are further strengthened by introducing targeted programmes, such as Foodbank⁴⁰, based on self-sustaining economies which manage effectively the resources of a community, rather than the sole provision of food items which work as short-term and not lasting solutions.

3.2. Labour/Employment

The detection of increasing child labour trends in Cyprus has been noted by NGOs active in the field which have initiated efforts to raise awareness and alert law enforcement and social welfare authorities. Child labour and forced labour are prohibited by international Conventions and national legislation, e.g. the ratified ILO Conventions and the Cypriot statute 'Protection of Young Persons at Work, No. 48(I)/2001'. Article 32 of the CRC refers to the right of every child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing hazardous work or work that interferes with their rights. At an EU level, Art.32 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights explicitly prohibits child labour and is set out to protect young people at work, following Directive 94/33/EC. It is the State's responsibility to give meaning to these provisions by implementing them in practice with preventive and protective measures. European mechanisms regarding child labour need to be improved dramatically as the EU's commitment to protecting children from this form of exploitation refers mainly to the EU's external action⁴¹ on urging third countries to sign and ratify relevant Conventions. On a national level incentives for education

³⁹ Collective Bahce, <http://collectivebahce.wordpress.com/>

⁴⁰ The participation of Cyprus in this programmes has been announced recently in printed media. The European Federation of Foodbanks brings together 253 food banks in 21 countries in Europe. Its goal is "to give each person in Europe, access to a sufficient and balanced diet, through the fight against waste and call for solidarity"; European Federation of Foodbanks, www.eurofoodbank.eu/portail/index.php?lang=en

⁴¹ See for example, European Commission, "A Special Place For Children in EU External Action", Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, (COM 2008), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0055:FIN:EN:PDF>

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

and public benefit for poor families with children need to be prioritised. At the same time, individuals and organisations have a duty to challenge consumer patterns and supply-provider chains, as well as to report incidents that come to their attention.

Such phenomena can also be countered by initiatives which endorse inclusive and healthy labour markets for the participation of parents and families in general, with added emphasis on young people, and increasing wages for those living under poverty lines. The downturn of employment levels, a 27,7% decrease in April 2013 in comparison with April 2012⁴², is severely affecting families' capacities to self-sustain and improve their life chances, including their children's opportunities in education, healthcare and beyond. Good communication between relevant authorities and stronger advocacy tools need to be in place in order to prevent and deter exploitative economic practices at the expense of children while simultaneously promoting decent employment and wages for all. There needs to be a harmonisation of actions, on an individual, societal, national and supranational level to tackle exploitative practices effectively.

3.3. Education

In times of economic backlash it is extremely important to ensure quality education that is free and accessible, as a right and not a privilege. Support throughout the school environment, active participation in education and training, including vocational training is a prerequisite which lays down the ground for future employment and an adequate standard of living. More schemes which will enable entrance into the current labour market, including vocational training and non-formal education starting from an early age are welcome and should be integrated or provided as an alternative to traditional forms of education.

Unemployment rates have risen dramatically in the last few years and are expected to reach an even higher peak within the following months, rendering it ever more arduous and competitive

⁴² Statistical Service of Cyprus (CYSTAT), 'Latest Figures: Registered Unemployed, Apr 2013', www.cystat.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/9B642C380528A913C2257AFE002D0033?OpenDocument&sub=2&sel=1&e=&print

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

for young people entering the labour market, which already presents shortages and job-specific saturation. Literacy levels are very high, with a great percentage of young people attaining higher education. However, the cultural trend of favouring general education followed by higher education results in vocational education and training (VET) attracting a very low percentage of secondary school pupils and consequently young adults⁴³. This is addressed by the National Productivity Strategy for 2007-2013 that seeks to accelerate productivity growth, although considering the latest developments, decrease in salaries to meet IMF requirements and a drought in high qualified jobs for young graduates, mitigates the aims and targets set by the Productivity Strategy. It is important that education is accessible, available and adaptable for the full enjoyment of all children. For example, primary education should be totally free with no “hidden” costs, and that special attention is given to migrant children with the provision of language courses in order to participate actively in the school and not just as ‘observers’.

3.4. Cross-cutting issues

Cross-cutting issues refer to the different factors which can influence the performance of interventions and are common to the aforementioned sectors, while at the same time can constitute a primary concern for child poverty.

The Gender Inequality Index (GII), which reflects gender-based inequalities in reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity⁴⁴, ranked Cyprus 22 out of 148 countries in 2012. Gender-sensitive approaches should be implemented to reduce the gender pay gap in Cyprus which is currently marked higher than the EU average. The gender income difference was marked as highest in Cyprus amongst EU States in 2011; 12.7% for men and 16.2% for women⁴⁵. This can affect single parent families and consequently children in them. Moreover, girls are more likely to be victims of abuse/exploitation/violence and consequently the bearers of social stigma which can lead to social exclusion in the long run, if psycho-social support and

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ UNDP, Op. cit., ‘Human Development Report 2013’, p.4

⁴⁵ European Commission, Eurostat, ‘Income Distribution Statistics’, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php?title=File:At-risk-of-poverty_rate_after_social_transfers,_2009-2011_\(%25\).png&filetimestamp=20130522202623](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php?title=File:At-risk-of-poverty_rate_after_social_transfers,_2009-2011_(%25).png&filetimestamp=20130522202623)

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

rehabilitation is not available and accessible. The same lurking danger applies in relation to Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) which can disproportionately affect young females, especially migrant females, but also children born as a result of sex trafficking and sex work settings. Trafficking for other labour purposes more equally affects the sexes, while generally high practices of abuse and exploitation tend to exist in a greater degree amongst non-native populations residing in Cyprus and children on the move.

Table C: Cyprus's GII for 2012⁴⁶

GII value	GII Rank	Reproductive health		Empowerment			Economic activity	
		Maternal mortality ratio	Adolescent fertility rate	Female seats in parliament (%)	Population with at least secondary education (%)		Labour force participation rate (%)	
					Female	Male	Female	Male
0.134	22	10	5.5	10.7	71	78.1	57.2	71.5

Figure 5: Income distribution statistics according to gender⁴⁷

	Total			Male			Female		
	2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011
EU-27 (1)	16.3	16.4	16.9	15.4	15.6	16.1	17.1	17.0	17.6
Euro area (1)	15.9	16.1	16.9	14.9	15.3	16.1	16.8	16.9	17.6
Belgium	14.6	14.6	15.3	13.4	13.9	14.6	15.7	15.2	16.0
Bulgaria	21.8	20.7	22.3	19.8	19.0	20.8	23.7	22.3	23.6
Czech Republic	8.6	9.0	9.8	7.5	8.0	8.9	9.5	10.0	10.6
Denmark	13.1	13.3	13.0	12.8	13.1	13.0	13.4	13.4	13.0
Germany	15.5	15.6	15.8	14.7	14.9	14.9	16.3	16.4	16.8
Estonia	19.7	15.8	17.5	17.5	15.4	17.6	21.6	16.2	17.4
Ireland	15.0	16.1	:	14.9	15.9	:	15.1	16.2	:
Greece	19.7	20.1	21.4	19.1	19.3	20.9	20.2	20.9	21.9
Spain	19.5	20.7	21.8	18.3	20.1	21.1	20.6	21.3	22.4
France	12.9	13.3	14.0	11.9	12.6	13.5	13.8	13.9	14.5
Italy	18.4	18.2	19.6	17.0	16.8	18.3	19.8	19.5	20.8
Cyprus	15.8	15.1	14.5	13.7	13.5	12.7	17.8	16.7	16.2
Latvia (2)	25.7	21.3	19.1	24.2	21.7	20.0	27.0	21.0	18.4
Lithuania	20.6	20.2	20.0	19.1	20.7	19.8	21.9	19.8	20.1
Luxembourg	14.9	14.5	13.6	13.8	14.6	12.7	16.0	14.4	14.5
Hungary	12.4	12.3	13.8	12.8	12.6	14.1	12.1	12.0	13.6
Malta	15.3	15.0	15.4	14.7	14.5	15.0	15.9	15.5	15.8
Netherlands	11.1	10.3	11.0	10.8	9.7	10.8	11.3	10.8	11.1
Austria	12.0	12.1	12.6	10.7	10.7	11.7	13.2	13.5	13.5
Poland	17.1	17.6	17.7	16.9	17.4	17.8	17.4	17.7	17.6
Portugal	17.9	17.9	18.0	17.3	17.3	17.6	18.4	18.4	18.4
Romania	22.4	21.1	22.2	21.4	20.7	21.9	23.4	21.4	22.5
Slovenia	11.3	12.7	13.6	9.8	11.3	12.2	12.8	14.1	15.0
Slovakia	11.0	12.0	13.0	10.1	11.7	12.8	11.8	12.2	13.1
Finland	13.8	13.1	13.7	12.9	12.4	13.2	14.7	13.8	14.2
Sweden	13.3	12.9	14.0	12.0	11.4	12.2	14.5	14.3	15.7
United Kingdom	17.3	17.1	16.2	16.7	16.4	14.8	17.8	17.8	17.6
Iceland	10.2	9.8	9.2	9.3	9.8	9.0	11.1	9.8	9.5
Norway	11.7	11.2	10.5	10.1	10.1	9.9	13.2	12.2	11.1
Switzerland	15.1	15.0	15.0	13.5	13.8	13.7	16.7	16.2	16.3
Croatia (3)	17.9	20.5	21.1	16.0	19.7	20.0	19.7	21.3	22.1

⁴⁶ UNDP, Op. cit., 'Human Development Report 2013', p.4

⁴⁷ European Commission, Eurostat, Op. cit., 'Income Distribution Statistics'

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

Unaccompanied minors and young migrants are often discriminated against and fall victim of institutional racism and xenophobia which in turn reduces opportunities for cohesive social and economic community development. Sometimes, the realities of child poverty levels are masked since child poverty is often disproportionately high in certain population groups, although not high enough to change the overall results. Migrant minors and young asylum seekers rely on the financial assistance of the State which increasingly falls short of placing them on an equal footing with natives of the same age⁴⁸. Asylum seekers have lower opportunities in education (language being the main obstacle), employment (inability to receive a work permit from the State), healthcare and housing (high costs). In a report, Pashardes highlights that ‘immigrant children were also at risk because their families earn low income’⁴⁹, if they are in employment at all that is. Recent experiences of NGOs, individuals and media reports indicate on exacerbation of incidents of marginalisation, pauperization and extreme living conditions for minority groups. More and more cases of young people encountering grave financial constraints who are unable to fulfil their basic needs and receive basic services surface in the media. Far-right party convictions on immigration issues require responses which attend to the vulnerable positions of migrant populations together with a comparative assessment of poverty levels of Cypriot nationals.

⁴⁸ An amendment to the national Refugee Law of 2000, announced on the 19th of July 2013 reduces the public welfare allowance for migrants above 14 years old to half of what it used to be, while half of the existing allowance will be transformed to food and clothing coupons; Press and Information Office of the Republic of Cyprus, ‘Statements by the Government Spokesman on decisions taken today by the Council of Ministers’,

www.moi.gov.cy/moi/pio/pio.nsf/All/20F54AB819F95EEEC2257BAC005DA232?OpenDocument

⁴⁹ Cyprus edirectory, ‘Cypriot children at low risk of poverty’,
www.cyprusdirectory.com/articleview.aspx?ID=540

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus



Photo of a migrant child in the media on the 18th of July 2013 during the decision taken by the Council of Ministers for the reduction of benefits provided to asylum seekers/ persons with temporary residence permit⁵⁰

3.5. Recommendations for strategic intervention programmes

- Programmes should primarily uphold the principles of participation, inclusion and non-discrimination and country/community ownership should be mainstreamed in all interventions.
- Interventions and programming should be led by a human-rights based approach; securing child rights so that child poverty risk is lessened.
- They should seek to ameliorate the range of sectors influencing child poverty levels following a multi-dimensional approach to child poverty in order to diminish long-term risk.
- Interventions should be strengthened by introducing and including self-sustaining elements which correspond to a sustainable answers to problems.
- Lobbying directed to both the government and EU governance institutions should be central to intervention programmes.

⁵⁰ Source: Politis Newspaper Online, 'Decision on the financial provisions/benefits to asylum seekers/ persons with temporary residence permit', www.politis-news.com/cgi-bin/hweb?-A=241060&-V=articles

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

- They should issue policy and advocacy advice and guidelines ('soft law') in order for national authorities to take into account the best interests of the child as the paramount consideration in reducing child poverty risk and vulnerability.
- Programmes should advocate the enforcement/amendment of legislation to comply with international obligations for the introduction of laws that aid development strategies.
- Increased cooperation with different stakeholders and building up of synergies on a national and European level in order to gain momentum and develop harmonized responses to child poverty.
- Interventions should seek to engage constructive dialogue with governments regarding the imposition of economic measures in order to assess their impact on child welfare.
- Measurement of poverty levels should adopt child-sensitive and non-financial indicators of progress as proposed by the United National Development Programme (UNDP) and the formulated MPI index, in addition to goals for macroeconomic adjustment.
- Transparency for interventions and public information concerning the allocation of financial resources.
- Interventions should be able to identify the reasons for child poverty and rights deprivation by holding accountable root causing mechanisms and powers, e.g. private bodies.
- They should encourage fair trade alternatives to break the cycle of child and forced cheap labour to ensure a fairer distribution of income to families.
- Programmes to ensure that investment and trade initiatives are reviewed and scrutinized to map their detrimental effects on the wellbeing of children.
- They should promote inclusivity in the market labour and schemes that support young people's employability.

4. Conclusion

Although this study focused on Cyprus, the current economic crisis and on particular sectors of intervention, it is important to note that the recommendations and outcomes are applicable to a range of social contexts and frameworks. Apart from the aforementioned sectors of intervention, other areas at risk and deserving of special attention include public health and housing. For reference purposes, Cyprus ranked within the ten lowest countries in the under-five mortality rate (U5MR)⁵¹, 3 in 1,000 live births and most of them due to neonatal causes while it had a general health index value of 0.943⁵². Data on the percentage of homeless people, understood in the broader sense of both primary and secondary homelessness⁵³ are unavailable, however, it would be interesting to make a comparison pre and post the current crisis.

What is evident from the outset is that child poverty is inextricably connected to the deprivation of basic generic human rights and age-specific child rights. Policy goals that aspire to rapid 'economic restoration' have the potential of marginalizing rights and can be described as short-sighted and inattentive to both short and long-term needs and available life opportunities. It is true that reducing the vulnerability of children should be of vital concern for societies wishing to secure their future, therefore the presence of children in any type of crisis requires the development of instruments to protect them and their interests. Crucially, different actors can plan specific interventions for children and youth but at the same time they can advance mainstreaming approaches and implement child-sensitive policy measures and decision-making processes. Ultimately, child poverty requires multi-dimensional, inter-disciplinary responses in order to take fully into account their specific needs and wishes equally and holistically.

⁵¹ Probability of dying between birth and 5 years of age, per 1,000 live births. UNICEF, "Committing to Child Survival: A Promise Renewed", Progress Report 2012, (September 2012), http://apromiserenewed.org/files/APR_Progress_Report_2012_final_web.pdf, p.11

⁵² UNDP, Op. Cit., 'International Human Development Indicators-Cyprus'

⁵³ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Homelessness', www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/homelessness.pdf

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ANNEX I: Overview of Recent Initiatives

The following are examples of recent initiatives by informal groups, NGOs and civil society, media and corporations in Cyprus which mark the need for immediate measures to address the growing problem of child poverty.



The NGO “Hope For Children” UNCRC Policy Centre announced the start of its new campaign ‘Eradicate Child Poverty’, addressing a variety of factors leading to child poverty

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

Cyprus Aid: Music festival, immediately responded to decisions taken to restructure the island's two biggest banks, which by collecting food donations and essential items for people in need



Utopia Collectiva's collective vegetable garden, 'Collective Bahce' (See page 15)

Little by Little



**Όταν οι καρδιές
μας ενώνονται, μπορούμε
να κάνουμε μικρά θαύματα.**

Η αγάπη και η κατανόηση που
δείχνουμε στους ανθρώπους γύρω
μας είναι η πιο ευγενική χειρονομία,
το μικρό θαύμα που βγαίνει αληθινό.
Μέσα από μικρές ενέργειες, όλοι μαζί,
προσφέρουμε σε αυτούς που
πραγματικά χρειάζονται τη βοήθειά
μας, αυτή τη δύσκολη στιγμή.
Μαζί μοιράζουμε ελπίδα,
χαρά και χαμόγελα.
Γιατί κάθε τι μικρό, μετράει.

Μαζί μπορούμε. 

*The supermarket chain Lidl placed a donation box at
its supermarkets for the public to donate food items
for fellow citizens in need*

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

The dairy company Charalambides Kristis began a programme called 'Participation' where volunteers assist others in any way they can. The company also provides a large number of milk to schools island-wide and through specific interventions.



αλφάμεγα

Κάλεσμα κοινωνικής ευαισθησίας



αγοράζουμε συμμετέχουμε συνεισφέρουμε
στον Ερυθρό Σταυρό

The supermarket chain Alphamega donated part of its sales to the Red Cross through a call for 'social sensitivity'.

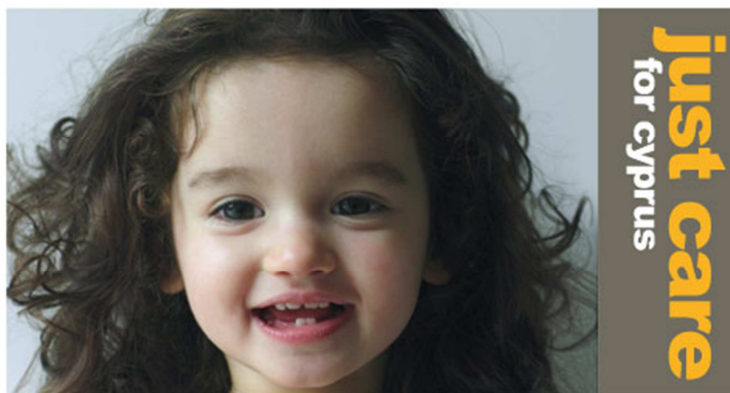
κάθε προσφορά μας γίνεται συνεισφορά σας



The charitable institution 'Agkaliazw' ('I hug') is helping families by providing them with food and basic need items using a 'drop-in' method at a market in the centre of Nicosia, Cyprus.

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

The TV channel Mega began a show, 'Yes, Together We Can', urging people to call and donate each time to a new social organization.



Sophia Foundation for Children is raising funds to directly support children in need in Cyprus through special programmes.



Stelios Philanthropic Foundation has set up the Food From The Heart (FFTH) programme to give a helping hand to people in need; the poor, the hungry, older people as well as the disabled, the unemployed and those struggling on reduced incomes, on a strictly non-discriminatory basis.

Mapping the multi-dimensional approach to child poverty reduction strategies in light of economic crises: An initial examination of Cyprus

The Volunteer Doctors of Cyprus have established the 'Free Clinics', soon to be five (one in every main city) offering free medical treatment and medicine to anyone who needs it and is unable to visit the hospital.

