

## **CRSP CONFERENCE – FEEDBACK FROM ‘YOUNG PEOPLE AND FUTURE PROSPECTS’ SESSION – DR MONICA MAGADI, CHAIR.**

Four papers were presented in this session, focusing on: young people not in education, employment or training (NEET); the effects of schools on health and well-being throughout the life course; child poverty and policy response in Northern Ireland; and different children’s experiences of education and leisure.

This was an interesting session, extending the earlier plenary discussions on the well-being of children and young people. The discussions addressed different aspects of issues affecting children and young people at different stages and in various circumstances, ranging from the young people NEET group to children’s experiences within the school and family environments with respect to deprivation and social exclusion. Among the specific issues highlighted were: the high priority of jobs for the NEET group; and the need for early interventions (e.g. in school nutrition programmes) for the well-being of children in the present and later stages.

The discussions on policy implications recognized the need for greater policy integration of organizations involved with young people. Such organizations include potential local employers, ( e.g. in addressing issues affecting the NEET group), and educational institutions, especially the private sector.

In addition, the group emphasized the need to incorporate the views of young people in identifying how best to address issues affecting them. For instance, the subject of teenage pregnancy featured prominently in the discussions and it was pointed out that the young people themselves, especially girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, are very well aware of the negative consequences. Incorporating their views on such issues would lead to more effective ways of addressing the problem and associated consequences.

Finally, the group emphasized the need for policies to be sensitive to the needs of different sub-groups of the population. It was pointed out that policies are sometimes based on the overall picture which may mask important sub-group differences. In the case of child poverty, for instance, it is widely acknowledged that recent government policies have played an important role in reducing child poverty in the UK, but to what extent is this applicable to the different regions (e.g. Northern Ireland) or different sub-groups of the UK population? Ensuring that policies are responsive to the needs of different sub-groups of the population would maximize impact and at the same time minimize inequalities between different sub-groups of the population.