

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

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New Economic Security Study Reveals Widening Income and Opportunity Gaps for Children in North America

BALTIMORE, MD – Globalization has contributed to rising incomes in Canada, the United States, and Mexico but has not improved economic security for many vulnerable children across the three countries, according to a new report. Despite rising national income, many poor families in the United States slipped deeper into poverty. Half of respondents in Canada and the United States and one-third of Mexicans felt uncertain about their children's financial futures.

Growing Up in North America: The Economic Well-Being of Children in Canada, the United States, and Mexico is the first report of its kind to track the economic health of children and families across the continent. The study uncovers the tremendous differences in the economic well-being of the 120 million children living in North America, but also their many shared experiences and surprising similarities, including:

- **Child Poverty:** Rates of child poverty in North America are high compared to other developed countries, with economically depressed regions, ethno-racial minorities, and North America's indigenous communities seeing the highest rates.
- **Economic Well-Being:** Despite an increase in national incomes from 1990 to 2005, there is evidence of growing income inequality among families with children, especially in the United States and Canada. Canada's public income support system for families is more effective in reducing levels of child poverty than income supports available in the United States or Mexico.
- **Access to Basic Necessities:** *Food insecurity* is a problem across the continent but most notably in Mexico, where one in five households does not have the resources to purchase a safe and healthy diet for their families. Many children in the United States and Mexico are forced to go without *health care* because of low family incomes. While families in Mexico struggle to secure basic housing conditions, the *high cost of housing* has become a significant and growing problem for low-income families in Canada and the United States.

"A family's economic circumstances are closely linked to their children's current and future ability to thrive," says Laura Beavers, senior associate and national coordinator of the KIDS COUNT project at the Annie E. Casey Foundation in Baltimore, MD, which is sponsoring the series of reports. "When families are denied basic access to resources and opportunity, their children are less likely to have the health, educational, and social advantages to make progress."

Growing Up in North America: The Economic Well-Being of Children in Canada, the United States, and Mexico has been published in three languages and is available at www.childreninnorthamerica.org. Katherine Scott, Vice President of Research for the Canadian Council on Social Development, was the principal author of the report.

The *Growing Up in North America* series is designed to build an improved knowledge base for the three countries, focused particularly on measures of child well-being. The first report – *Growing Up in North America: Child Well-Being in Canada, the United States & Mexico* – was issued in May 2006; *Growing Up in North America: Child Health and Safety in Canada, the United States, and Mexico* – the second in the series – was released in May 2007. The latest report, an analysis of the economic conditions for families across the continent, is the last of the series. The Project hopes this work will widen the scope of tri-lateral discussions at the governmental level to include our most important assets – our children.

The Children in North America Project strives to create a social and economic portrait of North America's children, highlighting different dimensions of child well-being against the backdrop of the changing environments in which children and families are living. Information on all of the 58 health and safety indicators, population, migration, education, and economic data, as well as supplemental material, is also available on the website. The Project's three partners are the Canadian Council on Social Development, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Red por los Derechos de la Infancia en México.

The Canadian Council on Social Development is one of Canada's key authoritative voices promoting better social and economic security for all Canadians. A national, self-supporting, membership-based organization, the CCSD's main product is information and its main activity is research, focusing on issues such as child and family well-being, economic security, employment, poverty, and government social policies. For more information, visit www.ccsd.ca.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for children in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. For more information, visit www.aecf.org.

The Population Reference Bureau informs people around the world about population, health and the environment, and empowers them to use that information to advance the well-being of current and future generations. For more information, visit www.prb.org.

Red por los Derechos de la Infancia en México (The Children's Rights Network in Mexico) is the union of 58 Mexican civil organizations and networks, which develops programs to offer supports to Mexican children in vulnerable situations. To realize its mission for children and adolescents to know, exercise, and enjoy their rights, the Network promotes a social and cultural movement in favor of children's rights, advocates for equitable legal frameworks and public policies, and strengthens the capacity of Mexican civil organizations dedicated to children. For more information, visit www.derechosinfancia.org.mx.

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