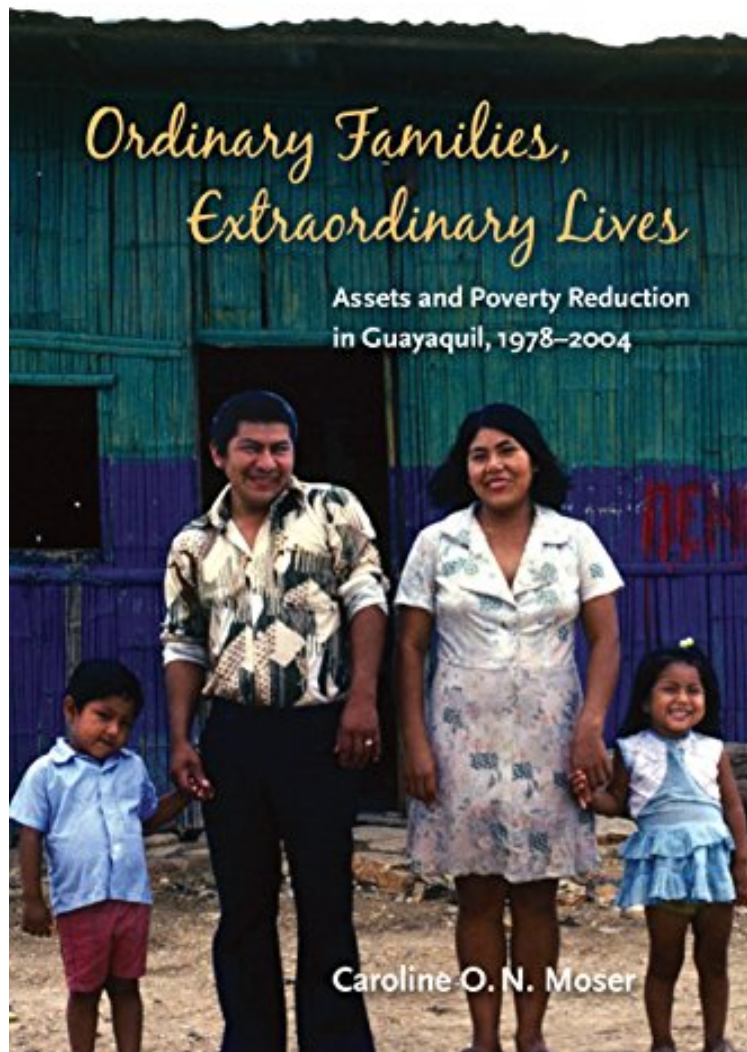


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Ordinary Families, Extraordinary Lives: Assets and Poverty Reduction in Guayaquil, 1978-2004

Caroline O.N. Moser

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Caroline O.N. Moser : Ordinary Families, Extraordinary Lives: Assets and Poverty Reduction in Guayaquil, 1978-2004 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ordinary Families, Extraordinary Lives: Assets and Poverty Reduction in Guayaquil, 1978-2004:

Fifty years after Oscar Lewis's famous depiction of five Mexican families caught in a "culture of poverty," Caroline Moser tells a very different story of five neighborhood women and their families strategically accumulating assets to escape poverty in the Ecuadoran city of Guayaquil. In *Ordinary Families, Extraordinary Lives*, Moser shows how a more sophisticated understanding of the complexities of asset accumulation as well as poverty itself can help counter inaccurate stereotypes about global poverty. It provides invaluable insight into strategies that may help people in developing countries improve their wellbeing. The similar socioeconomic characteristics and economic circumstances of the Guayaquil families in 1978, when Moser began her research, set the stage for a natural experiment. By 2004, these circumstances varied widely. Moser captures the causes and consequences of these developments through economic data, anthropological narrative, and personal photos. She then places this compelling story within the broader context of political, economic, and spatial changes in Guayaquil and Ecuador. Moser describes how households in a Third World urban slum relentlessly and systematically fought to accumulate human, social, and financial capital assets. Her longitudinal account of their odyssey captures long-term trends and changes in perception that are missed in snapshot assessments. Chapters in this holistic story cover diverse issues such as housing and infrastructure, community mobilization and political negotiation, employment, family dynamics, violence, and emigration.

"Poverty is terrible but it can be fought, sometimes with success. Caroline Moser presents the remarkable story of disadvantaged people whose success in fighting poverty has been extraordinary and yet the reasoning behind their approach is entirely fathomable. Moser tells us how the battle was waged by people stricken by adversity but not overcome by hopelessness. This is an inspiring book." —Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate and University Professor, Harvard University "This excellent volume provides a sustained longitudinal perspective over a quarter century on issues of poverty and well-being, a detailed analysis of intra-household dynamics across generations and across gender, and cross-fertilization between conventional quantitative methods of economics and the qualitative methods of the broader social sciences." —Ravi Kanbur, T. H. Lee Professor of World Affairs, Cornell University "The richness of Moser's longitudinal perspective and her insistence on putting the people living in poverty and their responses to its complex challenges at the core of this book result in an innovative framework of asset accumulation that will contribute to effective program and policy design for poverty reduction." —Pablo J. Farias, Vice President, Asset Building and Community Development Program, Ford Foundation "This unique rigorous study of the changing well-being of individuals, families, and communities over three decades breaks new ground in urban research. Moser's assets framework brilliantly explains the dynamics of change and forcefully opens new directions for policy. It is bound to become a classic in development studies!" —Michael Cohen, Director of the Graduate Program in International Affairs, The New School University "Moser's unique thirty-year study resonates well beyond Latin America. It provides important lessons for those working in African and Asian cities seeking to understand how household structure, gender relations, employment opportunities, and remittances all underpin efforts to escape poverty and accumulate assets in a context where daily violence increasingly erodes such efforts." —Professor Jo Beall, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Cape Town

About the Author Caroline O. N. Moser is a nonresident senior fellow in Global Economy and Development at the Brookings Institution and Professor of Urban Development directing the Global Urban Research Centre at the University of Manchester.