China announces development of multidimensional poverty measure

China has announced that it will develop a national multidimensional measure of poverty to more accurately reflect the experiences of the nation’s poor.

Dr Tan Weiping, Deputy Director-General of the International Poverty Reduction Center in China, stated this at a high-level side event on multidimensional poverty at the UN General Assembly on 25 September. The event was co-hosted by the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the governments of Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Germany under the aegis of the Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network (MPPN).

Speaking to an audience of more than 200 representatives from international governments and institutions, Dr Tan said: “We need to define poverty from the perspective of multiple dimensions…the definition of poverty should be able to capture poverty as the complex phenomenon it is and not only as the lack of income. A poverty standard based solely on income or expenditure cannot portray the multiple aspects that constitute poverty and that trap people in a chronic poverty vicious cycle.”

Dr Tan called on the UN to adopt a global MPI to support the more effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and guide the development of all countries. He argued that establishing more comprehensive measures of poverty would be crucial for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Post-2015 Global Development Agenda. These calls were echoed by representatives from the governments of Mexico, Colombia, South Africa, Ecuador and the Seychelles, and supported by 30 governments within the MPPN.

This year China identified 25 million households and 90 million people living in multidimensional poverty nationwide. The country is now developing a Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) to measure the levels of disadvantage experienced by poor people across different areas of their lives, such as education, health and housing, as well as income.

Dr Tan stressed that a multidimensional measure helps to inform policies aimed at eradicating poverty in economic, social, environmental and cultural spheres.

He said: “China's pro-poor policies, for example, are designed to build a moderately prosperous society by 2020, which means the improvements of the poor's living standards, involving the levels of income, education, health, housing, roads,
electricity, drinking water, etc. Poverty measurement by the Multidimensional Poverty Index can more accurately identify the poverty dimensions and targets as well as the degree of poverty, and is more conducive to coordinating relevant departments in poverty reduction.”

ENDS

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For more information on this Special Side-event at the 69th UN General Assembly, “Universal Multidimensional Poverty Measurement for the Effective Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals”, contact Franziska Mager, OPHI Communications Assistant, at +44 (0)1865 271915 or ophi@qeh.ox.ac.uk. For US enquiries, please contact Erin Hespe, OPHI Policy Officer, at +1 (202) 758 7990 or erin.hespe@qeh.ox.ac.uk

Notes to Editors

1. **The Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network**

The Global Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network (MPPN) was launched last year by the Governments of Mexico and Colombia and twenty other governments. The Network convenes policymakers at the Vice-Ministerial or Ministerial level and their deputies, together with officials of regional and international bodies, to share experiences in advancing better measure of multidimensional poverty and accelerating its reduction. The work of the Network is coordinated by the MPPN Secretariat, housed at the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI), and is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). For further information on the Network, please visit http://www.ophi.org.uk/policy/policynetwork/

2. **Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)**

OPHI is a research centre set up in 2007 within the Oxford Department of International Development at the University of Oxford. OPHI is led by Dr Sabina Alkire and works to develop and apply new ways of measuring and analysing poverty, human development and welfare, drawing on the work of Nobel Laureate economist Amartya Sen. For more information about OPHI, please visit www.ophi.org.uk