



OPHI *updates*

Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative
Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford



OPHI is a research initiative within the University of Oxford's Department of International Development, Queen Elizabeth House, launched in May 2007. Our overall aim is to build and advance a more systematic multidimensional framework for reducing poverty grounded in Sen's capability approach and similar ideas. Advancing this approach requires fundamental, sustained, multidisciplinary research and its effective dissemination. For more details, please visit www.ophi.org.uk.

New multidimensional poverty measure

Sabina Alkire, OPHI Director, and Professor James Foster have developed a new identification method and measure for multidimensional poverty. Their work focuses on the often-overlooked issue of identifying who ought to be considered as poor once multiple dimensions are invoked. Existing methods rely on various aggregation rules to modify the identification of who is poor to lie between the union (those considered poor according to all dimensions) and the intersection (those considered poor in at least one dimension).

In contrast, Alkire and Foster propose an identification method using a dual cut-off approach that identifies individuals as poor when they fall beneath the poverty threshold in a given number (or weighted sum) of dimensions. They then extend the FGT class of measures to multidimensional space. Their methodology has several strengths: (i) the identification strategy can be applied prior to any additive aggregation technique; (ii) the methodology satisfies certain basic axiomatic properties including subgroup decomposability; (iii) the dimension-adjusted headcount measure can accommodate ordinal data; (iv) equal or general weights can be applied; and (v) the methodology is highly intuitive and practical for reporting and targeting purposes.

This methodology, first presented at OPHI's launch in May 2007, is elaborated in OPHI Working Paper no. 7 (coming shortly). A brief summary of the paper, and STATA code, are available on the OPHI website. Foster presented this methodology at WIDER, UNDP, and Vanderbilt; Alkire presented it at conferences of IFPRI, the AERC, and the HDCA.

Further Missing Dimensions: OPHI and CHEDS in Beijing, 3-4 November 2007

At the invitation of Minquan Liu, Director of the Centre for Human and Economic Development (CHEDS), Peking University, the OPHI team gathered at a workshop in Beijing in early November to share the concept and

proposed application of the "missing dimensions" of poverty. Sponsored by the Ford Foundation and UNDP China, the memorable event provided many insights into the applicability of the surveys in China.

OPHI researchers presented revised versions of papers prepared for our launch in May on physical safety, the quality of employment, empowerment, the ability to go about without shame, and psychological and subjective well-being, and the interconnections between the proposed dimensions and health. UNDP representatives presented two additional papers on governance. Discussants' comments and animated discussions provided concrete critical feedback which the team will consider



From Right: Proochista Ariana, Diego Zavaleta, Maria Ana Lugo Solava Ibrahim, and Reiko Gotoh.

in our ongoing efforts to develop viable internationally comparable indicators for the missing dimensions.

CHEDS and OPHI researchers also considered concrete possibilities for future collaboration.

Oxford Development Studies symposium

Revised papers on the 'Missing Dimensions' of poverty presented at OPHI's launch workshop in May were published in the December 2007 issue of *Oxford Development Studies*, together with comments of discussants Grace Bediako, François Bourguignon and Stephan Klasen. It is hoped that the Special Issue will serve to broaden debate on the proposed shortlists of indicators.

Pilot surveys of Missing Dimensions

Following presentation of the Missing Dimensions at OPHI's launch in May, **Gallup International** piloted

abridged versions of the five proposed survey modules in Bolivia, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, Kenya and Pakistan. The questionnaire was administered to non-representative samples of 80-90 people in the capital city of each country, providing an opportunity for validity testing of the survey instrument, its further improvement, as well as preliminary analysis of the potential value added of collecting data on the missing dimensions and of possible relationships between and within dimensions. OPHI Research Officer Emma Samman presented an overview of the survey results at the International Society for Quality of Life Studies (ISOQOL) conference in December in San Diego.

Currently, efforts to implement the survey at a national level are ongoing in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and the Philippines, and other partnerships for data collection and analysis with interested research groups are welcome.

Focus groups convened in Bolivia

Qualitative testing of our questionnaires is key to their refinement. As a first step in this process, Luis Quiroga, OPHI researcher Diego Zavaleta and others convened eight focus groups in Bolivia in September to discuss the questionnaire with respondents from a range of socio-economic, demographic and geographic groups. Zavaleta also conducted in-depth interviews with several informants. Feedback from these sessions helped clarify how respondents understood the questions, identified questions that were not easily intelligible and pointed to aspects of each dimension that respondents thought should be added. Additional focus groups are currently being planned in Africa, Asia and elsewhere in Latin America; once again new partnerships are welcomed.

OPHI and PEP Network call for proposals

The Poverty and Economic Policy Network (PEP, www.pep-net.org) together with OPHI are pleased to offer up to five grants of about \$CAN 20,000 for studies on one of two themes (**Deadline 7 Jan 2007**).

Missing Dimensions of Poverty Data – Projects to critically examine the validity of OPHI's new survey instruments in a specific context, explore the interconnections among dimensions, and the policy value of such data.

Multidimensional Poverty Comparisons – Projects implementing one or more multidimensional poverty measures, and/or exploring technical issues such as identification, weighting and the handling of ordinal data.

Research grants offered to students

Through the HDCA and the Departments of International Development and Economics at Oxford University, OPHI is offering small grants to Masters and Doc-

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toral students to undertake research contributing to research on OPHI's Missing Dimensions or Multidimensional Comparison themes. Students are invited to test the validity of survey instruments in a particular setting or to apply OPHI's multidimensional poverty methodology to existing data.

2008 two-week Summer Schools:

OPHI will collaborate with Enrica Chiappero at HDCP-IRC (Pavia) in offering a two-week summer school beginning 28 August on **Multidimensional Poverty: Measurement and Analysis** in conjunction with the HDCA conference in New Delhi. This course, aimed at graduate students or researchers with strong quantitative skills, will provide technical grounding in the emerging literature and methodologies. Details are forthcoming shortly on www.hd-ca.org under Conference.

OPHI, with the UNDP Human Development Report Office (HDRO) and Queen Elizabeth House, will lead a two-week summer school for practitioners on **Human Development** in St Catherine's College, Oxford. Details are forthcoming on www.undp.org/hdro

What next for OPHI?

In 2008 OPHI will have two priorities: gathering data on our indicators in multi-topic surveys, and further exploring multidimensional poverty methodologies. Research Workshops will focus on the measurement of freedom, weighting issues within multidimensional poverty measures and methods of dealing with adaptive preferences when using subjective data.

OPHI is also delighted to welcome **James Foster** as a **Visiting Fellow** to OPHI in May-June 2008.

OPHI continues to evolve. We welcome your insights and suggestions. Please do write to us and introduce yourself or your institution: ophi@qeh.ox.ac.uk.

Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI)
Department of International Development
Queen Elizabeth House (QEH), University of Oxford
3 Mansfield Road Oxford OX1 3TB, United Kingdom
ophi@qeh.ox.ac.uk www.ophi.org.uk
tel +44 1865 271915; fax +44 1865 281801

Director: Sabina Alkire

Resident Researchers: Maria Ana Lugo, Emma Samman

Advisors: Sudhir Anand, Tony Atkinson, Amartya Sen

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