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Colombia and Mexico guide new network for governments to tackle global poverty

On 6 June, in Oxford: President Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia will join high-level representatives from Mexico and around 20 other governments to launch a joint scheme with Oxford University that will help emerging countries tackle poverty through the creation of a peer-to-peer network.

The Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network will provide support for countries that are considering or developing official measures of multidimensional poverty based on an innovative method developed at Oxford University. The method provides policymakers with an intuitive yet detailed picture of poverty that shows the number of poor people and the overlapping ways in which they are deprived.

The network has been created in response to overwhelming demand for information and support in using these poverty measures, and will enable early adopters to share their experiences directly with other members. It will be launched at a policy symposium in Oxford attended by Ministers or senior representatives of Angola, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, India, Iraq, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the Philippines, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Tunisia, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and Uruguay.

Colombia and Mexico put multidimensional measures in place at a national level in 2011 and 2009 respectively to underpin their strategies for tackling poverty. The officials involved will pass on lessons they have learned first-hand about how the method can be adapted to direct or shape social policies aimed at helping the poorest households and communities, and monitor their effectiveness over time. They will also discuss how they put the measures to use within an institutional framework.

Colombia included the Colombia-MPI in the National Development Plan as an official index for poverty measurement and as a tool for monitoring the progress of poverty reduction policies. When releasing the 2012 official poverty results and announcing the progress of the Multidimensional Poverty Index, President Santos said: 'Oxford University has been the pioneer university in poverty measurement, as well as research of policies that affect human development and poverty. We have been working together with them in order to validate our own progress towards a more efficient and transparent measurement of poverty. Through this we expect to improve the results and efficiency of our social policies.'[\[1\]](#).

Gonzalo Hernandez Licona, from Mexico's National Council of Social Development Policy Evaluation (CONEVAL), said: 'Our official national multidimensional poverty measure helps the national and local governments and also Congress, to make policies that improve economic well-being and social rights in an efficient and integrated way, and enables us to track changes by state and social groups. Our toolkit also contains biannual surveys, policy analyses, and an effective institutional framework. We are very happy to share our work and to foster relationships with people tasked with similar roles in other governments and organisations.'

The method adapted by Colombia and Mexico was developed at the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), of Oxford University's Department for International Development, by OPHI's Director, Sabina Alkire, and Professor James Foster. Dr Alkire said: 'Our approach starts with each person, and captures not just the percentage of people who are poor, but also the various ways in which they are deprived. The flexibility of the method enables policymakers to choose their own indicators to meet their country's specific needs and policy priorities.'

Developed in 2007, OPHI's method is being implemented at national or regional level in Bhutan, Brazil, China and El Salvador, as well as Mexico and Colombia, and is used to construct the global MPI published annually in UNDP's *Human Development Reports*. The network has been created because Mexico and OPHI were overwhelmed by enquiries from governments seeking to use this

new poverty measure. Through publicising the launch of a peer network, they hope that it will grow to include other members from around the world.

China's Deputy Director General for the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development (LGOP), Zheng Wenkai, said: 'We are already exploring how a multidimensional poverty measure might help us to meet our national plan goals. We anticipate that learning from other country's experiences through the network will enable us to identify the poor more effectively.'

The peer network is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and is managed and coordinated by OPHI along with Mexico's CONEVAL and Colombia's National Planning Department and Department for Social Prosperity.

See www.ophi.org.uk/policy/policynetwork/ for details of the network and case studies of multidimensional measures.

For more information, please contact:

Emma Feeny, Research Communications Officer, OPHI
Tel: +44 (0)1865 271528, email: emma.feeny@qeh.ox.ac.uk

University of Oxford Press Office
Tel: +44 (0)1865 280534, email: press.office@admin.ox.ac.uk

Photographs will be made available to media on request.

Notes for Editors

Background to the Alkire Foster (AF) method

In 2007, OPHI Director Sabina Alkire and Professor James Foster, an OPHI Research Associate and Professor of Economics and International Affairs at George Washington University, created a new method for measuring multidimensional poverty, referred to as the AF method for Alkire Foster. It uses a counting approach to identify 'who is poor' by considering the range of deprivations they suffer, and combines this with the Foster-Greer-Thorbecke (FGT) methodology that is the most widely used income poverty measurement. The resulting measure aggregates information to reflect societal poverty in a way that is robust, can be broken down by regions and groups and, importantly, can be broken down by dimension and indicator to show how people are poor.

For more information, see www.ophi.org.uk/research/multidimensional-poverty/alkire-foster-method/.

The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)

OPHI is an economic research centre within the Oxford Department of International Development at the University of Oxford. OPHI is led by 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. Alkire and Professor James Foster (see above) developed the Alkire Foster counting approach to multidimensional measurement, which is used to calculate the global MPI published in UNDP's *Human Development Reports*, and has been adapted to construct national measures of poverty and wellbeing, for example in Mexico, Colombia and Bhutan.

For more information about OPHI, please visit www.ophi.org.uk.

Mexico's National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL)

In 2004, a consensus among Mexican political parties led to the approval of the General Law for Social Development (LGDS), which created an independent Council for the Evaluation of Social Policy (CONEVAL) in 2006. The LGDS mandated CONEVAL to design a multidimensional poverty measure based on the insights of the Mexican law. A new multidimensional poverty measure, co-developed with OPHI researchers, was adopted by the Mexican government on 10 December 2009. The innovative measure evaluates income levels alongside other dimensions of poverty, such as education, housing, health, social cohesion and access to food.

For more information, see www.coneval.gob.mx/.

Colombia's National Planning Department (DNP) and Department for Social Prosperity (DPS)

In 2011, the Government of Colombia adopted a new poverty-reduction strategy included in the National Development Plan 2010 - 2014 "Prosperity for all". The strategy sets firm and binding targets for all government sectors that have a direct impact on social policy based on the Colombia-MPI. The government plans to reduce multidimensional poverty by 13 percentage points by the end of 2014 – from 35 per cent of the population in 2008, to 22 per cent in 2014. Devised by Colombia's Ministry of Planning, it is the first National Development Plan to use the Alkire Foster (AF) method for measuring multidimensional poverty.

For more information, see www.dnp.gov.co.

ENDS

[1] President Santos speech, April 18, 2013 during the disclosure of 2012 poverty results. Bogotá, Colombia