

Over 20 governments pressure UN to change how it measures poverty

Germany, Colombia and Mexico lead calls for a new poverty measure at side-event at the UN General Assembly on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

A global network of more than 20 governments and institutions are using a side-event at the UN General Assembly on 24 September to argue for a new multidimensional poverty index to stand alongside an income poverty measure. Why? Focussing on ending income poverty alone in the post-2015 development context overlooks policies that address other aspects of being poor, such as a lack of access to healthcare, quality schooling, housing, electricity and sanitation.

Research by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) at Oxford University, among others, shows startling discrepancies between income poverty and multidimensional poverty, which takes into account other factors. The Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network – which was founded by Colombia, Mexico and OPHI – will use the side-event to make a case for the UN to include a multidimensional poverty index, or MPI, alongside the \$1.25/day measure, to track progress towards nationally defined goals.

The MPI 2015+ would build on the global MPI published in the UN Development Programme's flagship *Human Development Reports*, and would incorporate the most accurate indicators possible with new data post-2015. It would enable policymakers to identify more easily what poor people lack, and address interconnected aspects of poverty more effectively. Because it reflects improvements directly, the MPI2015+ also celebrates success and provides strong political incentives to reduce poverty.

By calculating poverty from the household level upwards, the MPI 2015+ would reveal who is poor – to which regions and ethnic or other groups they belong – and also how they are poor: whether they lack adequate sanitation or electricity, quality education, nutrition, work, or other services. By capturing the varying intensities of poverty being endured, the index would also – unlike the \$1.25/day measure – shed light on the inequalities among poor people and enable policymakers to target the most marginalised and vulnerable within a country.

“Radical social advances are only possible if we understand – through careful observation and analysis – the deep roots of our poverty and the many shades of inequality within our society,” said President Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia, who launched the Network in Oxford in June 2013. “Hence the urgency of implementing a multidimensional approach in our battle against poverty.”[\[1\]](#)

The Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network connects the growing number of policymakers engaged in exploring or implementing multidimensional poverty measures based on the Alkire Foster method developed at OPHI, an economic research centre at the University of Oxford's Department for International Development.

The Network already has more than 20 member countries and institutions, including Colombia, Mexico, China, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria and Vietnam, and is expanding rapidly.

The MPI 2015+ would require better and more frequent data than are currently available, and the Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network will also use the side-event on 24 September to support the call made by the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda for a ‘data revolution’.

“A ‘data revolution’ survey could be regularly conducted by either national or international agencies, with questions on key comparable indicators of health, education, security, and living standards, as well as questions tailored to national priorities,” said Sabina Alkire, Director of OPHI and co-developer of the Alkire Foster method with Professor James Foster of OPHI and George Washington University.

“The survey should include questions on new indicators and dimensions, such as violence and quality of work, which poor people tell us are important aspects of the lived experience of poverty.”

The Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network enables early adopters of national multidimensional poverty measures, such as Colombia and Mexico, to share their experiences directly with countries exploring the possibility through a process of South-South learning, for example by providing advice on how to design a measure and put in place the institutional arrangements to sustain it.

Policymakers from Mexico and Brazil recently visited Vietnam, where they presented insights from their experiences of using multidimensional poverty measures to set poverty reduction targets and draft social welfare policies. Vietnam announced in June 2013 that it planned to adopt a multidimensional poverty measure at the national level.

The side-event ‘Multidimensional poverty measurement in the post-2015 development context’ will take place at **1.15-2.30pm on 24 September 2013, in Conference Room 6, North Lawn Building, United Nations**. Live and on-demand webcast coverage will be available on UN Web TV at <http://webtv.un.org>.

Speakers at the event include:

- Gudrun Kopp, Parliamentary Secretary of State, Germany
- Bruce Mac Master, Director, Department of Social Prosperity, Colombia
- Gonzalo Hernandez, Director of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL), Mexico
- Arsenio Balisacan, Minister of Socioeconomic Planning, Philippines
- Bruno Baranda, Minister for Social Development, Chile
- Ahmed Lahlimi Alami, High Commissioner of Planning, Morocco
- Bashir Yuguda, Ambassador, Supervising Minister, National Planning Commission, Nigeria
- Jaime Saavedra, Acting Vice President, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management, World Bank
- Erik Solheim, Chair, Development Assistance Committee, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- Sabina Alkire, Director, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)

If you are interested in attending the event, please contact:

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Notes for Editors

The Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network

The Global Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network (MPPN) convenes policymakers at the Vice-Ministerial or Ministerial level and their deputies, together with officials of regional or international bodies, to share experiences in advancing better measures of multidimensional poverty and accelerating its reduction. The work of the Network is facilitated and coordinated by the Secretariat, which is housed at the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI). The Network is supported by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). For more information on the Network, please visit www.ophi.org.uk/policynetwork.

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. Alkire and Professor James Foster 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.

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[1] During speech given at the launch of the Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network, 6 June 2013, Oxford