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**CHILDREN'S
MULTIDIMENSIONAL
POVERTY**

2019 Global MPI | Measurement | Country cases | Policy



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Editorial

We are devoting this edition of *Dimensions* to the littlest ones, who sadly are the poorest in the world. We begin with an article by Martin Evans, who brings us up to date on the latest in the measurement of child poverty, with a review of existing methodologies and key elements to keep in mind when working to reduce child poverty.

Next, we bring you some insights from the data on child poverty across a variety of contexts. First, we review the data in the new 2019 global MPI, which highlights the situation of children around the world. The data are striking: half of those who are multidimensionally poor are children. Children experience deprivations in almost all of the MPI's indicators, including nutrition, education and housing, which have a powerful impact on their lives, both now and in the future. In countries such as South Sudan, Niger and Ethiopia, over 90% of children are multidimensionally poor.

Then, Abdul Alim and Sabina Alkire discuss the case in South Asia, bringing us some good news from a situation where good news is scarce: the story of 37.5 million so – called *pioneer children* – young people who are the first generation in their families to complete six years of schooling.

And there's more: Gonzalo Hernández Licona, Ricardo Aparicio and Paloma Villagómez review the situation of children and adolescents in Mexico, where half of children and adolescents live in poverty.

In an interesting article, Ana Vaz, Christian Oldiges and Sabina Alkire shed light on what to keep in mind when building an MPI specifically for boys, girls and adolescents in order to implement evidence-based public policies. Later, the same authors show the differences between the two multidimensional measures most commonly used to compare international levels of multidimensional poverty – the MPI and the Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA).

Finally, an interview with Michelle Muschett, former Minister of Social Development of Panama, who talks about her country's child MPI.

We invite you to explore *Dimensions*, a new perspective for understanding poverty.

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Child Poverty: How to Measure and For What Policy Purpose?

By Martin Evans

There is a now consensus that addressing child poverty is important to breaking long-term social and economic drivers of poverty, and to reflecting the human rights agenda. Indeed, the commitment is enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This consensus is recent and not universal. Only three years ago I was discussing the issue with governmental officials who said, ‘children can’t be poor because they don’t work’. So, it is important not to be complacent and to work on improving evidential and advocacy-based approaches, as discussed later in this *Dimensions* issue.

Direct and Indirect Measures

It is important to measure poverty with an underlying policy agenda. Measurement should enable us to track how many children are poor, the depth and severity of their poverty and how these change over time. All poverty measures must have a basic ability to do that. Changes over time will reflect both the direct influence of policy on children (improving their access to quality education, for instance) and the indirect influence of changes in aggregate household welfare on children. Child poverty reflects both these: for example, improving women’s economic position will normally increase overall household incomes as well as the expenditures on child-related welfare. Child poverty is thus based on seeing children as particular and different in their needs but

also appreciating that they are strongly affected by overall household material wellbeing. This means that measurement has to capture these different but linked aspects of child poverty.

Measurement should be for the purpose of child poverty reduction and part of an overall poverty reduction strategy. It should be able to do two things: first, attribute child poverty reduction to overall poverty reduction and, second, capture child specific poverty reduction that is additional to overall poverty reduction.

Fitting Into and Across Poverty Measures

How do these two approaches to child poverty fit across the two ways of measuring poverty: monetary and multidimensional approaches?

Before we tackle the detail, it is important to recognise that fitting to existing definitions of poverty is not always straightforward. Some argue for much wider interpretations of rights and needs to encompass other social, psychological and spiritual domains of well-being. This is fine for expanding conceptual approaches to well-being but, for poverty reduction, it is probably best to align approaches to a concept of material well-being in the first instance. In any case, the availability of data from existing surveys will narrow the focus to what is currently identifiable and



measurable. But there can still be decisions to be made between well-being and material deprivation: for example, data on breast-feeding represents a dilemma as it rarely reflects material constraints – both rich and poor mothers do not exclusively breastfeed for different reasons. If a child poverty measure is based on the incidence of breastfeeding, it will put a lot of ‘noise’ into a poverty measure that tries to track material well-being.

Monetary Child Poverty

The simplest way to measure child poverty in monetary approaches is through disaggregation of total poverty incidence by age. This approach is in long standing use by OECD countries and has been associated with clear policies to address child poverty through taxation, social protection and service provision. However, it is important that is able to identify poverty in terms of the total population who live in poor households. I say this because there are still governments who solely count households in their national monetary poverty measures and thus cannot disaggregate by age.

The age-groups to use for poverty reporting depend on the audience and/or purpose. Responding to the Convention of Rights of a Child (CRC), the SDGs and other internationally mediated measures means reporting on the total children aged 0–17. But many other international approaches use the 0–14 definition of a child in order to align with employment profiles. Policy makers should focus on age-groups that match and reflect existing policy design: school age, nutrition programming, healthcare, early

education and childcare programmes. Knowing the extent and depth of child poverty can then feed into designing school feeding programmes, fee waivers and other policy areas.

Measurement should be for the purpose of child poverty reduction and part of an overall poverty reduction strategy.

It is possible to look within households at children, using monetary poverty measures, if their poverty status is used to look at their individual circumstances: are they in school, do they have poor nutrition or health, for instance. Indeed, it is possible to look at multiple children within poor households to see if all children in the household experience these deprivations. Looking within households at children is also possible using household level multidimensional poverty measures. However, calculating monetary poverty at the child level is rarely possible because children’s consumption is not captured separately in most surveys very easily. It is nonetheless possible to model household expenditures using a regression approach based on items of spending that are specific to children (such as clothing) to build a ‘within household’ measure of child monetary poverty. These calculations have raised the poverty headcount for children in Malawi and Cote d’Ivoire. However, distinguishing child poverty by age or gender would rely on detailed expenditure breakdown and attribution, which is not usually possible with normal household expenditure surveys.

Multidimensional Poverty

Child poverty in the developing world was first considered comprehensively through multidimensional measurement in 2003. This early approach to multidimensional poverty measurement has been methodologically overtaken by the Alkire-Foster indices but remains in place in Latin America and has subsequently contributed to MODA, which is discussed later in this edition of *Dimensions* in the article ‘MPI and MODA: Disentangling the Differences Between a Policy Tool and Advocacy Instrument’. This legacy is hugely influential and can confuse both statisticians and policy makers as there are similarities in approach and terminology that belie very substantial differences in robustness of estimation and their potential for application in policy making.

Setting aside the legacy, we see measurement approaches that replicate the distinction between 'disaggregation' of children in household measures and a separate identification of 'child level' poverty that we discussed earlier for monetary poverty.

Many countries have introduced national MPIs or similar measures (as Mexico's case presented later in this issue) to calculate national multidimensional poverty. Often included in these measures are indicators on school attendance, child nutrition or health that actually make poverty measures for the whole population fairly child sensitive. But they are computed at the household level and many of the indicators are also household level, such as the quality of the dwelling construction and access to utilities (electricity, water and sanitation). When we disaggregate the population living in multidimensional poverty we see over-representation of children, as usually occurs in household monetary poverty measures, which is confirmed in the updated global picture of child multidimensional poverty presented in the next article of this magazine.

The aim surely should be to triangulate child poverty across monetary and multidimensional measures in a way that helps policy makers specify how to respond and prevent it.

Many countries have also put in place individual level child poverty measures. This is far more doable than the analogous monetary approach as data exists on deprivations that are identified for each child. But age-related issues matter far more fundamentally. There are different indicators that are specific to the age of the child (the so-called lifecycle approach) but it means that many children do not have the risk of specific deprivation (a child cannot be deprived of attending school if they are not old enough to go to school, for instance). If these indicators are taken separately then different indices have to be computed for different age-groups, which results in multiple indices that are different from each other as well as different from the national MPI index measure – a situation that is both difficult to report and build into a coherent poverty reduction policy.

One solution is to look across indicators and age-groups to compute indices that examines aggregates of deprivation specific to the child population. Also, there are many household level indicators in child level multidimensional poverty indices (for example, the quality of dwelling construction, access to utilities and information). This means that information on national MPIs is duplicated in child level indices but is differently treated and can be reconciled with the national index easily. The discussion in the article 'Building a child poverty measurement' in this *Dimensions* issue outlines how to separately identify and specify child level indicators and add them to the national index to produce a new 'child poverty version' using an expanded set of data solely on children. This approach reconciles the 'age-specific' and 'household level' data problems of a child level index. If done, this allows the resulting child level index to both replicate the national index and to be additional to report child poverty separately. This approach can consider direct and indirect child poverty issues together in consistent ways. It is not perfect, but probably less imperfect than multiple and inconsistent indices.

Ways Forward

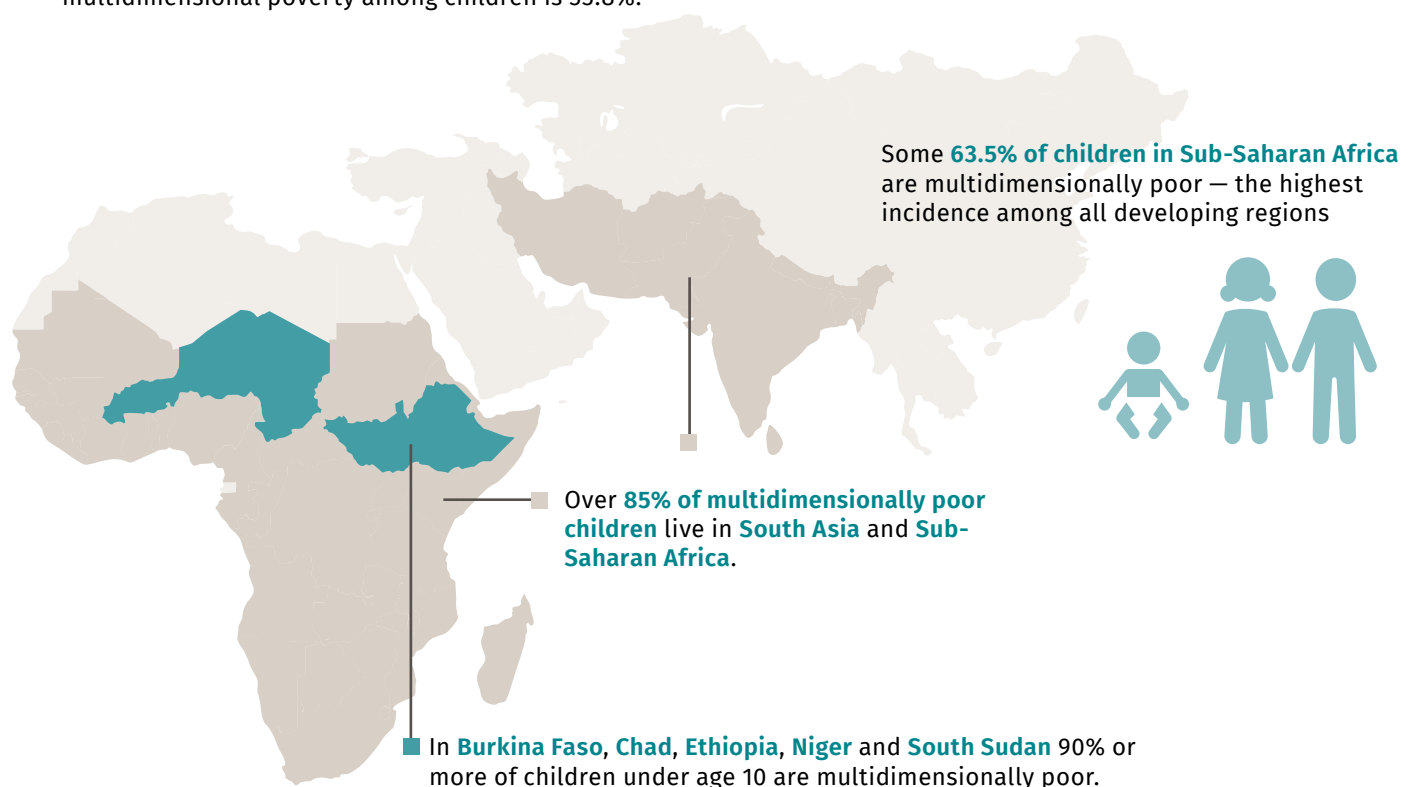
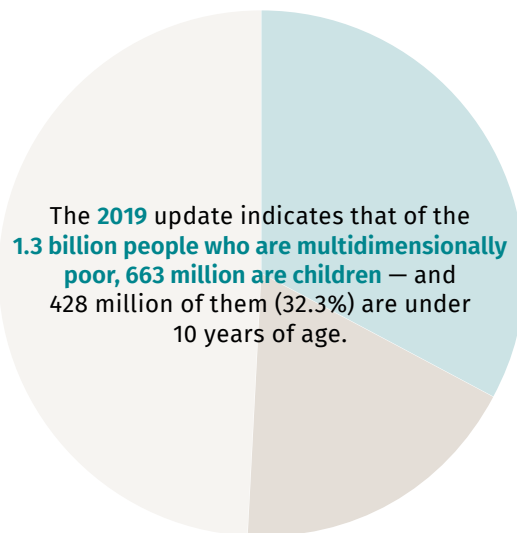
What is the question for the multidimensional poverty measurement community? Is it about the right approach to multidimensional child poverty measurement, or what works best within a suite of measures to allow child poverty to be identified in both direct and indirect terms? The aim surely should be to triangulate child poverty across monetary and multidimensional measures in a way that helps policy makers specify how to respond and prevent it. This is a more applied agenda than simply having a measure in place that allows a tick in a box in a list of SDG statistical reporting requirements. There is no valid argument about one approach fulfilling a rights-based approach and another not: both can and do. But a different emphasis on, or interpretation of, the obligations from child rights could help: an applied empirical interpretation of Article 2 of the CRC 'to act in the best interests of the child' may point to a more pragmatic and applied approach that also results in a more robust and consistent calculation of child level multidimensional poverty – one that fits across different populations and approaches and allows policy makers to more clearly specify and evaluate child poverty reduction programmes. The examples from Mexico and reflections from Panama later in this issue both clearly show that such an approach is possible, doable and has real benefits for policy. ■

2019 Global MPI: Half of multidimensionally poor people are children

The **global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)**, developed by OPHI and UNDP, compares acute multidimensional poverty for more than 100 countries and 5.7 billion people and monitors changes over time.



One adult in six is multidimensionally poor — compared to **one child in three**. While 17.5% of adults in the countries covered by the MPI are multidimensionally poor, the incidence of multidimensional poverty among children is 33.8%.



Children are more likely than adults to be multidimensionally poor and deprived in all indicators.

A higher proportion of children than adults are multidimensionally poor and deprived in every one of the MPI indicators, and the youngest children bear the greatest burden

Source: [Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019: Illuminating Inequalities](#). UNDP and OPHI.

2019 Global MPI Key Findings

Across 101 countries, covering 1.3 billion people, 23.1% are multidimensionally poor.

Two-thirds of multidimensionally poor people live in middle-income countries.

There is massive variation in multidimensional poverty within countries. For example, Uganda's national multidimensional poverty rate (55.1%) is similar to the Sub-Saharan Africa average (57.5%), but the incidence of multidimensional poverty in Uganda's provinces ranges from 6.0% to 96.3%, a range similar to that of national multidimensional poverty rates in Sub-Saharan Africa (6.3–91.9%).

Half of the 1.3 billion multidimensionally poor people are children under 18 years of age; a third are children under the age of 10.

This year's spotlight on child poverty in South Asia reveals considerable diversity; while 10.7% of South Asian girls are out of school and live in a multidimensionally poor household, that average hides variation as the equivalent percentage is 44.0 in Afghanistan.

In South Asia 22.7% of children under five years of age experience intrahousehold inequality in deprivation in nutrition (where at least one child in the household is malnourished and at least one child in the household is not). In Pakistan over a third of children under age 5 experience such intrahousehold inequality.

Of 10 selected countries for which changes over time were analysed, India and Cambodia reduced their MPI values the fastest – and they did not leave the poorest groups behind.

There is wide variation across countries regarding inequality among multidimensionally poor people – that is, in the intensity of poverty experienced by each poor person. For example, Egypt and Paraguay have similar MPI values, but inequality among multidimensionally poor people is considerably higher in Paraguay.

There is little or no association between economic inequality (measured using the Gini coefficient) and the MPI value.

In the 10 selected countries for which changes over time were analysed, deprivations declined faster among the poorest 40% of the population than among the total population.

Source: [Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019: Illuminating Inequalities](#). UNDP and OPHI.



The Insights From a Comparable Child Poverty Measurement: The Case of South Asia

By Abdul Alim and Sabina Alkire

The global multidimensional poverty index (MPI) has been very useful in shining a light on child poverty. When, in July 2017, the global MPI was age-disaggregated to profile children's poverty, the Executive Director of UNICEF at that time, Tony Lake, stressed in his High Level Political Forum address the headline that half of the world's poor people who live in acute multidimensional poverty, according to the global MPI, are children. The global MPI is an index of acute multidimensional poverty that covers three-quarters of the world's population – mainly those living in developing regions – and over 100 developing countries. It is produced by OPHI at the University of Oxford with UNDP's Human Development Report Office.

A Step Further

In 2018, in collaboration with OPHI, UNICEF's regional office in South Asia wanted to take this headline on child poverty a step further and worked on a study titled ['The State of Multidimensional Child Poverty in South Asia: A Contextual and Gendered View'](#). We already knew that half of the

world MPI poor people were children and that children had higher levels of deprivations than adults in each of the ten indicators of the global MPI. But for policy action we wanted to look further within the household and see the gender of the children, their age and their family circumstances.

Through the empirical insights provided by this study, we aim to catalyse debate and strengthen actions to redress the immense toll of child poverty in South Asia. We focus on seven South Asian countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan. We use Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) for six countries and the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) for Bhutan. The data came for 2010–2017/18 with Bhutan having the oldest data (2010) and Pakistan the most recent (2017/18). Since this builds on surveys from seven countries, the numbers are large enough to even be disaggregated to specific age intervals. This provides very important insights and the ability to link and study policy actions and even budgetary allocations with regards to current levels of investments.

How do we zoom into children's lives? The global MPI is based on individual level data for three of the 10 indicators. These are: nutrition, years of schooling and school attendance. In each indicator, child information is included. In the case of nutrition, we draw on children aged 0–5 and consider a household deprived if any child is stunted and/or underweight in that household. In years of schooling, we count a household deprived if no child aged 10–17 and no adults have completed at least six years of school. For school attendance, a child is identified as deprived if he or she is not attending school up to the age at which he or she should complete class eight and has not yet completed it. We look at children's deprivations in these indicators up close.

The motivation is to influence the policy process and its outcome in South Asia by looking at individual child deprivations and linking it to life cycle-based analysis, as deprivations affect children across separate age cohorts. The lack of this sort of solid evidence creates incentives for politicians to sometimes engage in a policy process and outcome that is driven by expediency or short-term gains for their own constituencies. Generating and building easy to consume evidence helps them to make better and informed decisions, especially if the social outcomes are aligned with political advantage.

One in eight children in South Asia, at this time of rapid intergenerational change, is a pioneer child within their household.

Within the context of the household, we see that poor children have distinctive patterns of deprivations and that this varies by gender and region and in terms of intra-household inequality. Such information is very useful for effective policy and resource allocation.

We give just one example in the study – the fascinating case of pioneer children in South Asia. We define pioneer children as children aged 10–17 who have completed six years of schooling and live in households where no adult has done this; they are thus the first generation with this accomplishment. Rather unexpectedly, we ran across an amazing fact: one in eight children in South Asia, at this time of rapid intergenerational change, is a pioneer child

within their household. There are actually 37.5 million such children in the region. And rather surprisingly, the percentage is higher among girls than boys.

We celebrate the achievements of pioneer children but are disconcerted by some other surprises. Alas, 10.5 million pioneer children are multidimensionally poor by the global MPI. Around 63% of pioneer children in India still used open defecation in 2015 and 24% of pioneer girl children in Bangladesh in 2014 had been married early. Also, we see stark intra-household inequality: one-third of pioneer children share their household with another child aged 10–17 who sadly has not completed six years of schooling and is not attending school. A multidimensional lens shows the complexity of these interconnections and how they vary across gender, age, and country. Such precision and insights sharpen policy.

So, this study has methodological innovations: it is the first study to shine a light inside households using the global MPI and unpack gendered, intra-household and other details using the child-specific indicators. Methodologically, we hope that, in the future, reports of multidimensional poverty indices that are constructed at the household level on the basis of individual data, will undertake this kind of gendered and intra-household analysis. ■



Photo: Syed Nabil Aljunid



Child and Adolescent Poverty and Social Rights in Mexico: A Multidimensional Poverty Measurement Approach

By Gonzalo Hernández Licona, Ricardo Aparicio and Paloma Villagómez

One of the reasons it is so important to eradicate child and adolescent poverty is because of its consequences for a person's present and future development. Poverty during childhood is more likely to be permanent, since its effects on health and physical and cognitive development are usually irreversible. The economic and social dependency of girls, boys and adolescents generates complex dynamics of vulnerability that require appropriate public policy strategies.

This article provides a brief diagnosis of child and adolescent poverty (affecting children under the age of 18) in Mexico, using the official poverty measurement methodology developed by the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL is its acronym in Spanish). This methodology is based on a multidimensional poverty perspective and adopts a human rights approach. One of

its advantages is that it allows for the provision of disaggregated measurements, whether on a territorial level – for federal and municipal entities – or for priority groups, such as the child and adolescent population.

The possibility of monitoring child and adolescent poverty in Mexico has facilitated collaboration between CONEVAL and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Since 2009, these institutions have established a joint working strategy for the study of child poverty, which has enabled them to gain a better understanding of its characteristics and evolution over time, and to identify elements for the design of public policies. The collaboration between the two institutions has already resulted in four reports (in 2010, 2012, 2013 and 2016) evaluating the state of poverty and access to social rights by girls, boys and adolescents in Mexico.

Background

The obligation to guarantee the full exercise of children's rights is enshrined in various international and national treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the General Law on the Rights of Girls, Boys and Adolescents (LGDNNA in Spanish) and the General Law on Social Development (LGDS in Spanish). The latter also establishes the functions of CONEVAL in the evaluation of social development policy and poverty measurement. With respect to this second objective, the law indicates that measurement should take into account family income, schooling lag, access to health services, social security, food and basic services in the household; the space and quality of the household, as well as the degree of social cohesion and access to paved roads.

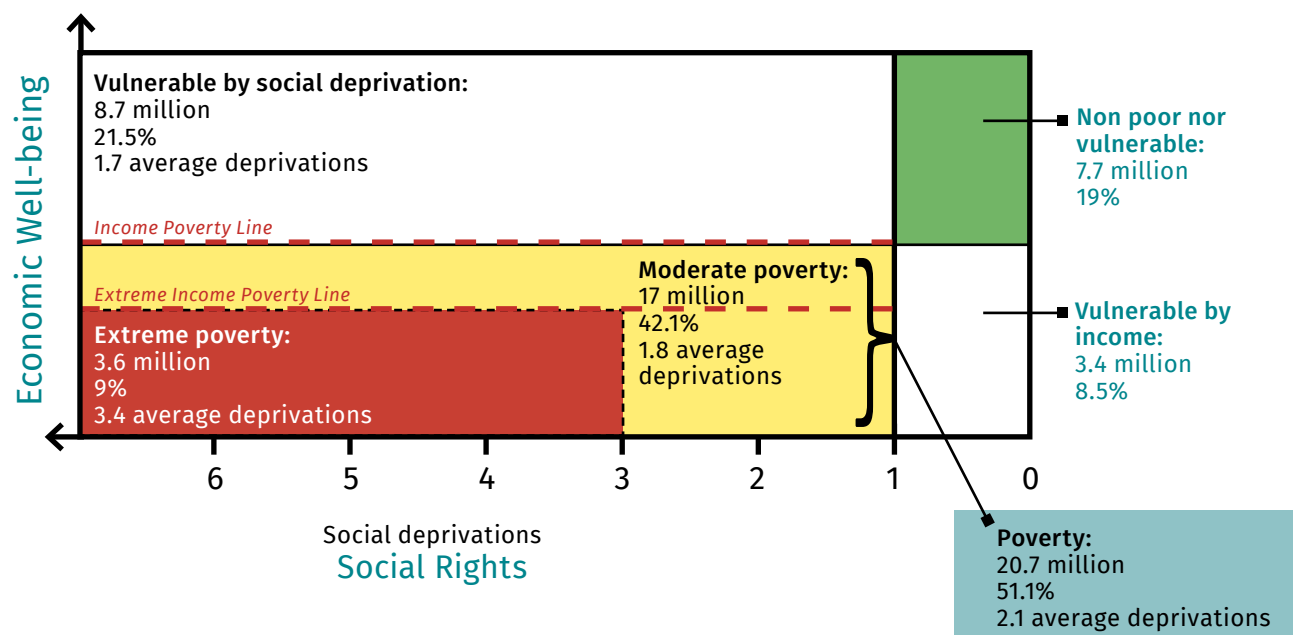
The methodology for multidimensional poverty measurement responds to the human rights approach by incorporating the principles of universality (it focuses on people as universal rights-holders), interdependency (it considers the intrinsic intersection between social deprivations and social deprivations and

income), indivisibility (it considers dimensions to be non-hierarchical and for social deprivation to exist when at least one right is violated) and progressiveness (it allows for the observation of gradual changes resulting from economic policies that have an impact on income or social interventions that improve access to rights). Thus, the methodology defines a person to be in a situation of poverty when she/he does not have enough income to acquire basic food and non-food goods and services, and when they lack access to at least one social right. In extreme poverty, income is insufficient to cover even basic food requirements and people demonstrate at least half of the social deprivations.

Child and adolescent poverty in Mexico

In 2016, half of the child and adolescent population in Mexico lived in poverty, 9% lived in extreme poverty and only one in every five children under the age of 18 did not experience economic or social deprivations.

Graph 1. Percentage, number and average deprivations of the child and adolescent population (0 to 17 years) in poverty or vulnerable condition, Mexico, 2016.



Source: CONEVAL estimations based on the 2016 MCS-ENIGH MEC.



Poverty levels on a national scale saw practically no change between 2008 (44.4%) and 2016 (43.6%), but extreme poverty declined continuously. This trend is also evident among the child and adolescent population: extreme poverty dropped by more than 30% during this period.

This decrease has been possible thanks to the reduction of social deprivations, especially access to health services. This deprivation decreased by a third of its initial level among the child and adolescent population (from 39% to 13%). Lack of access to social security is the highest deprivation among the general population and is even more common among minors, indicating that adults do not have access to protection mechanisms that can be extended to their children. This leaves children exposed to age-related risks such as accidents, diseases and perinatal complications, among others.

The difficulties with consistently increasing the income of the population have been the main obstacle to the sustained reduction of poverty in Mexico,

The indigenous child and adolescent population presents higher levels of social deprivation compared to those of the non-indigenous population (78.5% and 47.8%).

a situation which is more critical among the child and adolescent population. Even though minors do not usually receive income directly, they belong to young and large families with fewer economic providers and more dependants. Additionally, from an early age the demands of family life present inherent difficulties that are exacerbated by the precarious integration of young adults into the job market and the absence of universal social protection mechanisms.

Table 1.

Poverty, social deprivations and economic well-being in the child and adolescent population, 2008-2016 (percentage)

Indicators	Population 0-17 years		Population 18 years or older	
	2008	2016	2008	2016
Poverty				
Population living in poverty	53.3	51.1	39.2	39.9
Population living in moderate poverty	39.5	42.1	29.7	32.9
Population living in extreme poverty	13.8	9.0	9.5	7.0
Social deprivation				
Schooling lag	10.5	7.1	28.6	22.5
Lack of access to health services	39.0	13.3	38.1	16.6
Lack of access to social security	73.9	60.8	59.8	53.3
Lack of housing quality and space	23.0	16.5	14.6	9.9
Lack of housing to basic household services	27.3	22.7	20.3	17.7
Lack of access to food	25.7	23.3	19.5	18.5
Wellbeing				
Population with income below the extreme income poverty line	21.3	22.3	14.1	15.1
Population with income below the income poverty line	58.1	59.6	43.7	46.2

Source: CONEVAL estimations based on the 2008 MCS-ENIGH and the 2016 MCS-ENIGH MEC.

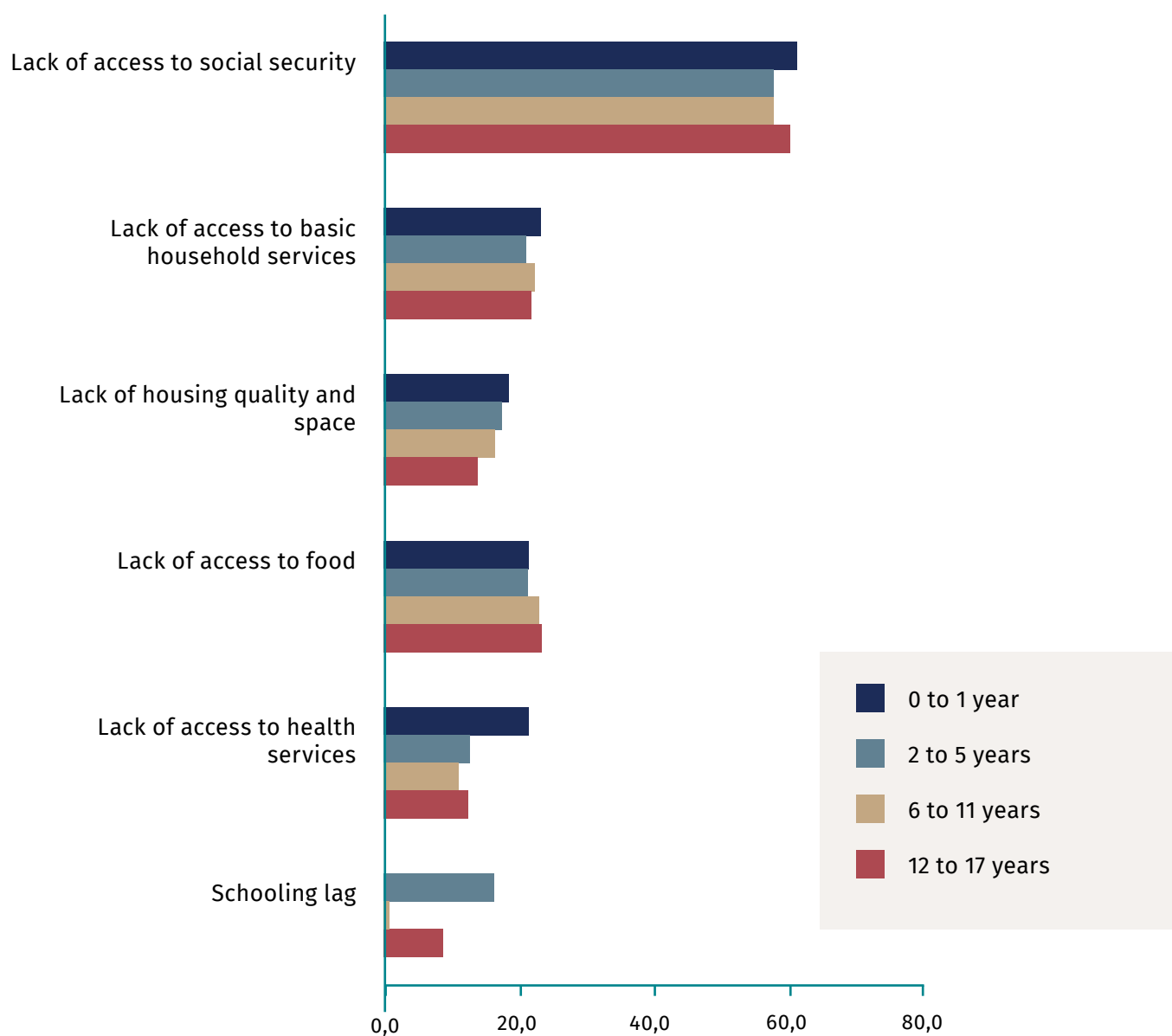
Child and adolescent poverty is not at all homogeneous. Early childhood, for example, is a phase of particular vulnerability: when children are younger, the housing they live in is of a lower quality and their lack of access to health services increases. As childhood progresses and homes are consolidated, other deprivations such as food insecurity and educational lag are accentuated, affecting the minors' future development.

Furthermore, some attributes like ethnic back-

ground are linked to scenarios of discrimination that maintain certain populations in a situation of historical underdevelopment. The indigenous child and adolescent population presents higher levels of social deprivation compared to those of the non-indigenous population (78.5% and 47.8%). With the exception of access to health services, whose coverage shows significant advances in predominantly indigenous areas, children in these groups are exposed to deprivations that result in the violation of their fundamental rights.

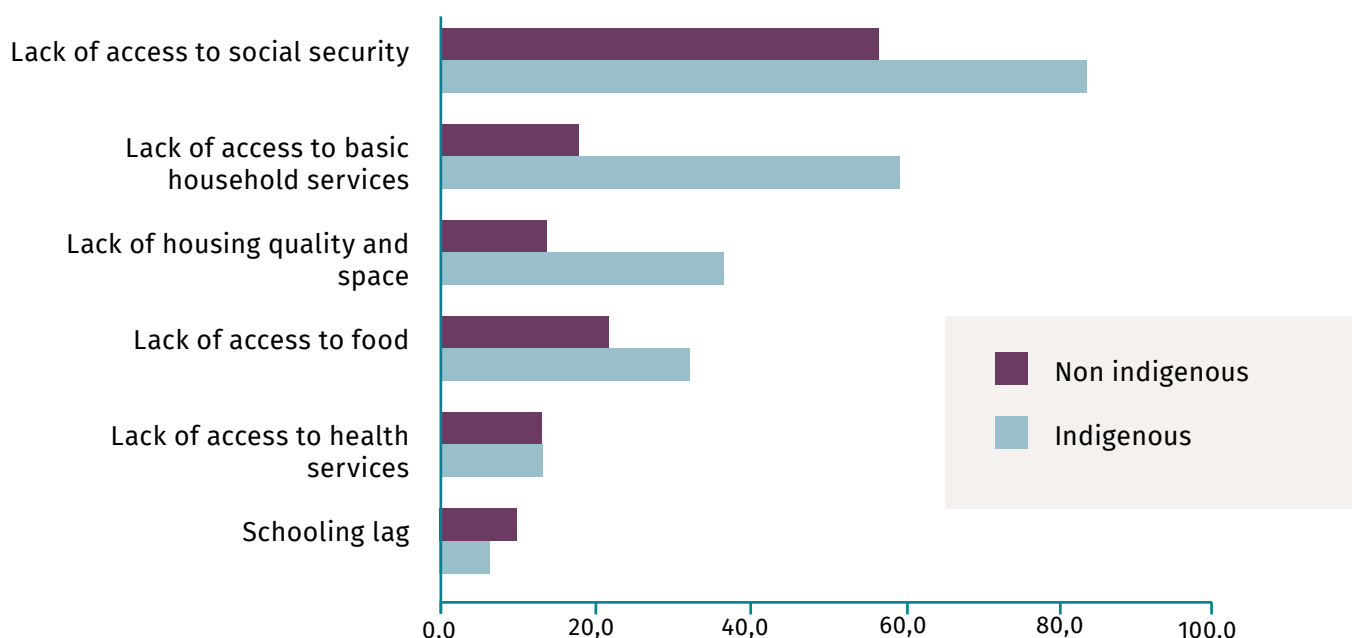
Graph 2. Indicators of social deprivation by age and ethnic background, Mexico 2016

Percentage of child and adolescent population with social deprivation, by age groups.



Source: CONEVAL estimations based on the 2008 MCS-ENIGH and the 2016 MCS-ENIGH MEC.

Percentage of child and adolescent population with social deprivation, by ethnicity.



Source: CONEVAL estimations based on the 2008 MCS-ENIGH and the 2016 MCS-ENIGH MEC.

Recommendations

Child and adolescent poverty has two distinctive features: children's dependency on the living conditions of the adults in charge of their care and its prolonged effect throughout their lifetime.

Although the specificity of poverty at this age could benefit from the design and incorporation of child-specific poverty indicators, we believe that differentiated measurements would increase the risk of fragmenting social policy actions and diluting their effects. Furthermore, in the case of the child population, their well-being clearly depends largely, although not exclusively, on the well-being of the adults that care for them.

Interrupting the intergenerational reproduction of poverty should be central to the design of public policies for children and adolescents. Breaking this cycle requires actions that substantively improve families' income and promote its fair distribution within households, benefiting the equitable development of minors. It is also important that all government and ministry orders are carried out in a coordinated way, improving the accessibility and quality of basic services in early infancy, childhood and adolescence.

It is essential to recognise the additional vulnerability experienced by minors belonging to populations that suffer from discrimination (such as rural and indigenous populations) and whose structural precariousness has led to underdevelopment in their infancy. It is necessary to work on strengthening protection mechanisms against all forms of violence, discrimination and exploitation that undermines the fundamental rights of children and adolescents. Although these problems are not exclusive to poverty, it does exacerbate them, leaving girls, boys and adolescents in a state of severe defencelessness. ■



Building a Child Poverty Measure to Inform Policy

By Ana Vaz, Christian Oldiges and Sabina Alkire

Children are especially vulnerable to poverty. Child poverty tends to be higher than poverty among adults, and the experience of poverty during childhood can have negative lasting effects on individuals' lives. The 2030 Agenda, in particular target 1.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), requires information on multidimensional poverty among children. Most commonly, this information will be obtained by disaggregating the national Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) by age to illuminate child poverty. It could however also draw on a stand-alone measure of child poverty¹.

Tracking child poverty based on national measures

Many countries are already tracking multidimensional poverty using national MPIs. These national indices define poverty status based on a set of indicators, typically including some related to children's achievements (e.g. household is deprived in school attendance if there is at least one school-age child who is not attending school) and others capturing household features that affect children's life chances (e.g. adequate sanitation and safe water). Child poverty can be measured by disaggregating the national MPI by age groups, which implies identifying as poor those children who live in poor households. To

date, this disaggregation has proved very powerful. It shows that often poverty is higher among children than among other groups. It also shows how children are poor by revealing the different composition of deprivations they tend to experience.

These national measures might, in some cases, be enriched to provide a stronger diagnostic and policy tool to fight children's individual deprivations. The process of enriching such poverty measures consists of expanding the indicators based on children's achievements, for example beyond nutrition and school attendance to include child labour, early marriage and immunisation. Furthermore, the micro-data used to estimate the national MPI can also be used to analyse the intra-household patterns of child deprivations that are reflected in the national MPI.

Methodologies to measure child poverty

Another possible approach to capture child poverty is to build a stand-alone child poverty measure, which can reveal deprivations that strike siblings of different ages or genders differently within the same household. In the literature, there are some examples of methodologies to measure child poverty. The most prominent are the "[Bristol approach](#)" and the

¹ This article is based on OPHI Working Paper 127 "[The State of Multidimensional Child Poverty in South Asia: A Contextual and Gendered View](#)".

Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA). Both methods define child poverty as the sum of unmet child rights. On the one hand, the anchoring of the measures' parameters on internationally agreed standards, like the Convention on the Rights of the Child, makes them easy to justify and, hence, especially attractive for advocacy purposes. On the other hand, some axiomatic requirements of these methodologies might hinder their usefulness in informing policy making.

The 2030 Agenda, in particular target 1.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), requires information on multidimensional poverty among children.

One requirement that might be particularly problematic is the aggregation of indicators into dimensional sub-indices using the 'union approach'. In this step, used in MODA, a child is identified as deprived in a *dimensional sub-index* if she/he is deprived in at least one of the indicators in that dimension. The disadvantage of the MODA approach is that, when breaking down the index by dimension to see the composition of poverty, it is not possible to see which of the indicators combined in that dimension is driving the level of deprivation. This loss of information makes it difficult to identify the appropriate policy responses and to track progress. For example, suppose a measure where a child is deprived in the right to health if she is not immunised, or if there was no skilled birth attendant at her birth. In these circumstances, policy makers face a high level of deprivation in health but will not know if they should design interventions aimed at increasing immunisation or improving access to skilled birth attendance or both.

Another rigid requirement is equal weights across dimensions/rights and zero weights for non-rights. While, equal weights across rights is a useful normative tool, the grouping and identification of indicators into child rights is itself the subject of ongoing discussion at the national level and the combination of this requirement with union-based dimensional sub-indices may give odd results. For example, the requirement of equal weights might lead to situa-



tions where two deprivations with disparate levels of impact on children's well-being have equal importance in identifying a child as poor. In some MODA applications, "ownership of an information device", the indicator that captures access to information, is considered as important as school attendance and education attainment, the indicators that capture right to education. In these circumstances, if 10% of children are out of school (only) and 10% lack a cell phone (only), it will be far cheaper to hand out cell phones than put 10% of children into school and both would have the same impact on measured poverty. In addition, this weighting requirement can be used to exclude indicators such as child labour, which might be seen as relevant to measure child poverty, but do not correspond to a child right.

National MPI plus a 'linked' C-MPI

The Alkire-Foster method, which underlies all existing official national multidimensional poverty measures, can be used to build child-specific measures of poverty.

Grounding the national and child-specific poverty measures on the Alkire-Foster method makes them easier to build because the same experts can confidently design both – and interpret – because stakeholders have become familiar with the MPI method. However, having two separate measures, with different indicators, creates challenges in communication and policy applications. For example, both measures might include water and sanitation, but grouped into different dimensions and with different associated policy recommendations. Which one is the country to use? Also, it might be difficult for the Minister of Planning to memorize and rattle off the 4 dimensions and 14 indicators of the national MPI and the



7 dimensions and 12 indicators of the child MPI to a journalist who wants to write about poverty.

To minimize confusion and maximize the potential contribution of the MPI to policy, the national and child MPIs should be linked. In particular, we propose that countries build a 'linked' C-MPI by extending the national MPI to include child specific deprivations. This 'linked' C-MPI, defined at the child level, includes the exact same dimensions and indicators as the national MPI, plus a child dimension. The new child dimension has age-specific indicators that trace each child's individual deprivations. The household-level indicators, from the national MPI, capture children's deprivations associated with their context, while the individual level indicators, in the child dimension, directly capture the child's individual situation.

When this linked and streamlined measurement strategy is followed, the identification of poor children builds on the identification used in the national measure. In other words, the 'linked' C-MPI inherently identifies as poor the children living in poor households – the same children that would be identified as poor when disaggregating the national measure by age groups. In addition, the 'linked' C-MPI brings into view children with high levels of deprivations who are living in non-poor households

and, hence, are non-poor based on the national metric alone.

Having a child-specific measure, in addition to a national multidimensional poverty measure, enables governments to focus on the particular situation of children.

To obtain this intuitive result, the weights of the indicators and the poverty cut-off of the 'linked' C-MPI are set in a way that means children living in poor households are identified as poor. Table 1 presents an example of the structure of a national MPI, side by side with a 'linked' C-MPI. The national MPI includes 10 indicators and identifies as poor those who are deprived in at least one-third of the weighted indicators. The 'linked' C-MPI adds a fourth dimension – two child-specific indicators. The weights of the 'linked' C-MPI indicators and

the poverty cut-off of one fourth ensure that those children who are deprived in at least one-third of the household level indicators, which corresponds to a fourth of the C-MPI weighted indicators, are identified as poor. Additionally, this weighting structure and poverty cut-off ensure that the children who are deprived in both child-specific indicators but in none of the household level indicators are also identified as poor, as are children deprived in one child-specific indicator plus a smaller group of household indicators.

Having a child-specific measure, in addition to a national multidimensional poverty measure, enables

governments to focus on the particular situation of children. The analysis of a C-MPI 'linked' to a national MPI provides valuable information to inform policy making. First, it identifies poor children living in non-MPI poor households, as well as additional child deprivations carried by children living in MPI poor households. Second, it shines a light on the intra-household situation, showing whether all children are poor within a household or just a few. Third, it shows how child poverty varies according to the age and gender of the child. Yet it does so in a compact easy-to-communicate form, which builds on and deepens analysis of a National MPI, and creates integrated and synergistic policy messaging. ■

Table 1: Example of national MPI and C-MPI

Dimension	Indicator	National MPI k = 1/3	C-MPI k = 1/4
HH Education	Years of Schooling	16.7%	12.5%
	Child School Attendance	16.7%	12.5%
HH Health Environment	Child Mortality	16.7%	12.5%
	Nutrition	16.7%	12.5%
Living standards	Electricity	5.6%	4.2%
	Improved Sanitation	5.6%	4.2%
	Improved Drinking Water	5.6%	4.2%
	Flooring	5.6%	4.2%
	Cooking Fuel	5.6%	4.2%
	Assets Ownership	5.6%	4.2%
Child Development	Indicator 1		12.5%
	Indicator 2		12.5%



MPI and MODA: Disentangling the Differences Between a Policy Tool and Advocacy Instrument

By Ana Vaz, Christian Oldiges and Sabina Alkire

Target 1.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals requires states, by 2030, to *reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions*. To monitor this goal, countries will have to define and measure multidimensional poverty. There are a few examples of measures of multidimensional poverty, and sometimes it might be difficult for policy makers and civil society alike to distinguish one multidimensional measure from another. One pair of measures whose similarities and differences are not well understood are the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) and the Multidimensional Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA). This article attempts to shed some light on this issue.

One first source of confusion is that both MPI and MODA refer to families of measures, rather than two specific measures. Therefore, in order to avoid spreading misconceptions, it is important to be precise about what particular examples of the families of measures one is comparing. For example, it has

been said that while MODA identifies poverty at the level of the child, the MPI identifies poverty at the household level. This is not accurate. The MPI is a general framework. There are examples of child MPIs, which identify each child as poor or non-poor (e.g. [Bhutan's Child MPI](#) and [Panama's MPI for Boys, Girls and Adolescents](#)). Many MPIs are focused on the household – all national MPIs to date adopt this focus for example. Others focus on the youth, women or other groups.

To illustrate the key points of overlap between the MPI and MODA approaches we compare a child MPI and a child MODA, both built using the same dimensions, indicators and weights. The similarities are important: both measures aim to measure multidimensional poverty, are based on the Alkire-Foster counting method to varying degrees and complement monetary indicators. Yet, they differ in how they structure indicators into dimensions. Here, we will focus not on conceptual inspirations for each measure (Amartya Sen's capability approach and child rights), but rather on technical distinctions.

The child MPI would identify poverty at the level of the child, combining deprivations that affect all household members (e.g. lack of improved sanitation) with deprivations that directly affect that child (e.g. undernutrition). While indicators are clubbed into dimensions for ease of communication – assisted delivery and immunisation might form the dimension of health, for example – the profile of the child's deprivations is made at the level of the indicator, rather than the dimension. Thus each indicator's contribution to overall poverty can be traced. In terms of policy incentives, any reduction in any deprived indicator of the poor, reduces MPI. The MPI is generally disaggregated by any groups for which the data are representative and broken down by indicators to provide a detailed picture of where and how multidimensional poverty manifests itself. One poverty cut-off is usually used to define acute poverty and alternative cut-offs are reported in the tables.

To understand the value-added of different multidimensional poverty measures it is important to carefully scrutinize them and consider which primary objectives they are structured to fulfil.

MODA focuses exclusively on children. Its dimensions must be equally weighted. To capture the varying relevance of rights across the child life cycle, MODA has two different specifications: one for children aged 0 to 4 and another for children aged 5 to 17 years old. In both cases the indicators are defined at the household level; for instance, water, sanitation and housing account for more than half of the rights included in the measure. The indicators present in the data are sorted according to the child right they best reflect and then aggregated into a sub-index for each dimension. MODA counts the dimensions in which a child is deprived. Thus, the overall index can be broken down by dimensions but not by indicators. In terms of policy incentives, MODA decreases only when a child who was deprived in a dimension becomes non-deprived in all indicators associated with that dimension. Rather than defining



poverty using a single poverty cut-off, MODA typically presents the poverty figures for all possible poverty cut-offs, giving an idea of the complete distribution of children's number of unmet rights.

The difference between MODA and MPI, methodologically speaking, lies not in the child focus (MPIs can also be constructed for children), nor in the application of multiple poverty cut-offs. The main methodological difference is the decision whether to aggregate all indicators within a dimension into a sub-index or to enter each indicator individually. MPI does not aggregate because its primary objective is to provide policy guidance. It is useful to tell a policy maker that there are two health challenges: 1) these children are poor and lack DPT (diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus vaccines) immunisation and 2) these children live in areas that lack assisted delivery facilities. Policy makers will know if interventions are successful in reducing either problem, then MPI will be reduced (this is called dimensional monotonicity). In contrast, the primary objective of MODA is to provide an advocacy tool that draws attention to child rights. Because of this purpose, it is structured to give alarming headlines. In the example above, MODA will communicate that a certain number of children are deprived in health: either they lack immunisation, a skilled birth attendant or both. It is not clear from the dimensional aggregate which deprivation is more prevalent, nor which children suffer both deprivations at the same time. This makes MODA less precise for policy. However, if the deprivations are identical then, by definition, the number of children affected in MODA will be larger, because of the dimensional sub-indices. So, the MODA advocacy function will be fulfilled.

To understand the value-added of different multidimensional poverty measures it is important to carefully scrutinize them and consider which primary objectives they are structured to fulfil. ■



Child MPI for Better Design and Implementation of Policies in Panama

In September of 2018, Panama launched its Multidimensional Poverty Index for boys, girls and adolescents as a complement to the national MPI launched the prior year. It was the first official MPI for that specific age range in Latin America. We discussed this index with Michelle Muschett, Panama's former Minister of Social Development.

Considering that Panama already had a national Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), why was the decision made to create one to specifically measure poverty in boys, girls and adolescents?

Analysis of the results of the first calculations of the national MPI in Panama showed that 48% of people living in multidimensional poverty were under the age of 18. Based on the premise that boys, girls and adolescents have different needs, and that the deprivations affecting them have deeper and longer-lasting consequences than for adults, and the urgency of addressing them, the government of Panama saw the need to create a version of the MPI focused on this group. It is the most vulnerable group in the country and the goal was to foster better design and implementation of policies that are aimed at ensuring their well-being and full development.

What was the nature of the discussion at the technical and political level? What difficulties did you face in implementing the MPI for boys, girls and adolescents?

The Social Cabinet, the advisory body of the Cabinet Council, played an indispensable role in the development of the tool, serving as a space for them to

articulate social policy with a comprehensive vision to encourage sustainable and inclusive development.

Government officials held comprehensive discussions about the national-level, political decisions needed to build the tool. These were informed by a technical team which comprised the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Economy and Finance and the National Institute of Statistics and Census.

The most intense discussions centred on gathering information related to the nutrition indicators and the final structure and dimensions of those indicators. After consultations and recommendations from our technical team and early childhood experts, we were able to reach consensus on a structure that was in line with a human rights vision and on the actions needed to gather the necessary data to calculate the indicators on nutrition and food security for this MPI.

One significant challenge was building the indicators while taking into consideration the differences among childhood age groups. These vary depending upon the indicator being measured due to the particularities of each of these groups.

What were your main findings?

The [national Child MPI](#) (see table 1) is higher than the national MPI, with 32.8% and 19% of people multidimensionally poor, respectively. Similarly, the national Child MPI shows a higher intensity of poverty than the national MPI as boys, girls and adolescents, who are multidimensionally poor, suffer more deprivations simultaneously.

The dimensions with the greatest impact on multidimensional poverty for children in Panama are access to education and information (21.4%) and housing and environment (20.6%). In turn, the indicators that most impact poverty in this group are care, childhood activities and recreation, followed by overcrowding, and education and early childhood stimulation.

How will this indicator be used in public policies?

A tool like the national Child MPI will be key in designing and formulating public policies, since it helps to identify areas where this group's needs are

The evidence indicates that investment in children can mean substantial savings for countries as it reduces the need for future spending in health, education and social assistance.

the greatest. This means we can approach them with a clearer understanding of the causes of these issues and focus our efforts on the territories and sub-groups within the under-18 population.

In addition to the priorities established by each administration regarding the national Child MPI results, a policy bureau for boys, girls and adolescents will be established with the participation of various sectors of society. It will be based in a university and the goal will be to analyse information in depth and formulate public policy recommendations.

What would you recommend to other countries that have the objective of eliminating child poverty?

First and foremost, this should undeniably be a top priority in all countries. Policies aimed at eradicating child poverty should have a strong focus on early childhood, while not forgetting the adolescent population. At the same time, it is critical to work in a coordinated way with different sectors of society to comprehensively address the most urgent needs of children and adolescents.

The evidence indicates that investment in children can mean substantial savings for countries as it reduces the need for future spending in health, education and social assistance. Furthermore, there is a return on investment in children as it can act as a catalyst for economic and social development by facilitating the creation of productive human capital while ending cycles of poverty. Accordingly, the actions that we take – or do not take – today, with respect to childhood and adolescence, will have a decisive impact on our ability to honour our commitment to the 2030 Agenda. ■



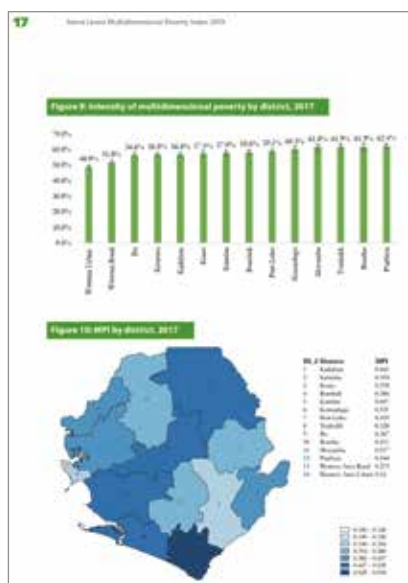
Michelle Muschett, Panama's former Minister of Social Development

Table 1. Dimensions, Indicators, and Deprivation Thresholds for the National Child MPI of Panama

Dimension	Indicator	Deprivation cut-offs. A child is deprived if:
Housing	Precariousness of housing materials (secure construction)	<p>If a house in an urban area has wooden, quinchá, adobe, metal, palm, cane, bamboo, or sticks, other materials (cardboard) or has no walls; or if the roof is made of wood, palm, straw, palm fronds, or other materials; or if the floors are made of wood, dirt, or other materials.</p> <p>If a house in a rural area has wooden, quinchá, adobe, metal, palm, cane, bamboo, or sticks, other materials (cardboard) or has no walls; or if the roof is made of wood, palm, straw, palm fronds, or other materials; or if the floors are made of wood, dirt, or other materials.</p> <p>Due to the specific characteristics of dwellings in the Guna Yala district, a home will be considered deprived if the walls are made of metal, other materials (cardboard) or has no walls; or if the roof is made of wood, or other (lower quality) materials; or if the floors are made of wood, dirt, or other materials.</p>
	People per room or overcrowding	A bedroom is shared by three (3) or more people. (not considering bathroom and kitchen).
Water and sanitation	Lack of improved sanitation	<p>Urban area: the home has a pit latrine or latrine; or the service is connected to a sewage system or septic tank, but is shared with other households; or it has no sanitation system.</p> <p>Rural area: the home has a pit latrine or latrine or service that is connected to a sewage system or septic tank, but is shared with other households; or it has no sanitation system.</p>
	Lacking or limited availability of improved water sources	<p>The main drinking water source is: an unprotected well, shallow well, or tank; a river, ravine, lake, pond, stream, rain water, or other source.</p> <p>Households whose main water source is an IDAAN (Institute of Aqueducts and Sewers) public aqueduct are considered deprived if they receive water fewer than seven days a week or fewer than 12 hours a day in the summer or winter.</p>
Health and nutrition	Prevention of health risks	<p>0 to 4 years: did not receive the DPT vaccine (4, 5, or 6 in 1).</p> <p>5 to 11 years: has not had their growth and development monitored at least once in the last year, or has not had at least one dental exam in the last year.</p> <p>12 to 17 years: did not have any sexual and reproductive health counselling by their parents or older siblings, professors or teachers, or health professionals.</p>
	Varied diet	<p>0 to 5 months: not exclusively breastfeeding</p> <p>6 to 11 months: did not consume four of the five food groups in the last 24 hours* **.</p> <p>12 to 23 months: did not consume four of the five food groups in the last 24 hours* **.</p> <p>2 to 17 years: did not consume the five food groups in the last 24 hours*.</p> <p>* The five food groups are considered: 1. Cereals, grains, or roots. 2. Fruits and vegetables. 3. Eggs or meat. 4. Dairy (milk, yoghurt, or cheese). 5. Fats (butter, mayonnaise, etc.).</p> <p>** Children between 6 and 23 months old can be said to have consumed dairy products if they have had access to the products listed or if they are nursing.</p>

Dimension	Indicator	Deprivation cut-offs. A child is deprived if:
Education and information	Education and early training	<p>0 to 3 years: does not receive early stimulation or participate in learning programmes.</p> <p>4 and 17 years: does not attend school, or attends, but not daily. If they have completed middle school, they are not considered deprived.</p> <p>Or they are considered deprived under the following conditions. 0 to 6 years: they do not regularly engage in at least one educational activity with an adult in the home (reading or telling stories; singing or playing instruments; drawing or making things with their hands). If they remain alone the majority of the time or in the care of someone under age 15, they are considered deprived.</p> <p>7 to 17 years: has repeated the last school year (whether or not they currently attend). If they never attended school, they are considered deprived.</p>
	Internet access	<p>0 to 9 years: the household does not have access to the internet (via a fixed or wireless network in the home, or elsewhere).</p> <p>10 to 17 years: has not used the internet in the past 6 months.</p>
Water and sanitation	Child protection	<p>0 to 9 years: is not listed in the Civil Registry.</p> <p>10 to 17 years: is employed and works more hours than permitted (1 hour or more for 10 and 11-year-olds; over 14 hours for 12 to 14-year-olds; over 36 hours for 15 to 17-year-olds).</p>
	Childcare, childhood activities, and recreation	<p>0 to 4 years: cared for the majority of the time by someone under the age of 15, or is cared for by the mother or father at work, or is alone, or does not play, engage in sports, or go to the park with their regular caregiver or other adult in the household, or there are none of the following recreational spaces in the community: parks and green spaces, playgrounds, athletic fields or facilities.</p> <p>5 to 17 years: does not regularly engage in at least one cultural activity (go to the movies, theatre, or other shows, play a musical instrument or attend artistic workshops or similar things, read books, stories, or comics) or does not engage in at least one athletic or recreational activity (play or practice a sport) or there are none of the following recreational spaces in the community where they live: parks and green spaces, playgrounds, athletic fields or facilities.</p>

Source: [Índice de Pobreza Multidimensional de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes en Panamá – IPM-NNA. Aspectos conceptuales y metodológicos, y resultados correspondientes al año 2018.](#)



With support from UNDP and OPHI, Sierra Leone launched its official national Multidimensional Poverty Index (SL-MPI) on 14th May. The event was led by the Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Nabeela Farida Tunis, and Osman Sankoh, Statistician General of Statistic Sierra Leone. The results show that two-thirds of the population of Sierra Leone (64.8%) are multidimensionally poor.

www.mppn.org/sierra-leone-mpi

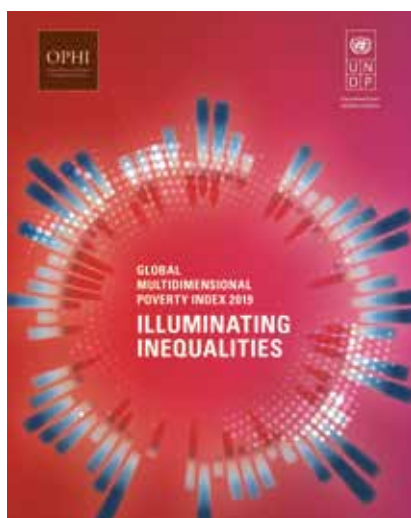


2019 MPPN Annual Meeting

The 7th Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network (MPPN) Annual Meeting took place from 1st–3rd July in Seychelles. Government and institution representatives gathered to discuss on how to tackle poverty in all its dimensions and to learn from experiences around the world.

www.mppn.org/mppn2019

www.mppn.org/seychelles-launches-pilot-mpi



2019 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index Released

On 17th July, OPHI and the UNDP Human Development Report Office (HDRO) launched the findings from the 2019 global Multidimensional Poverty Index which shed light on the level of progress made towards achieving SDG 1. Presenting the report and its key findings were Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator, Pedro Conceição, Director of the HDRO, and Sabina Alkire, Director of OPHI. Nabeela Tunis, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, Sierra Leone, Gonzalo Hernández Licona, Executive Secretary of CONEVAL in Mexico and Haishan Fu, Director of the Development Data Group from the World Bank participated in a panel discussing the findings.

ophi.org.uk/global-mpi-2019



Handbook on How to Build a National Multidimensional Poverty Index Launched in New York

UNDP and OPHI launched a handbook on how to build a national MPI to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals. The Side event took place at the High Level Political Forum on 18th July, with participation from Colombia, India, Pakistan. This publication is available online at

www.mppn.org/handbook-national-mpi

2019 MPPN Events Calendar

12–24
August

OPHI Summer School 2019, Mexico

Organised by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative at the University of Oxford, this year's summer school will be held with the support of CONEVAL at their headquarters in Mexico City, Mexico, 12–24 August 2019.

25
Sept.

United Nations General Assembly Side Event, New York

MPPN will organise a side event at the United Nations General Assembly on the 25th September at 8am, Conference Room 1 at the United Nations Headquarters.

2019 MPPN Annual Meeting

The 7th annual meeting of the Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network took place in Seychelles 1st–3rd July with the participation of more than 20 countries and six international agencies.

During the meeting, the Seychelles Government launched their Pilot National MPI and the President of the Republic of the Seychelles, Danny Faure, joined for the launch. The meeting also featured South-South exchanges about how countries and institutions are measuring and tackling multidimensional poverty to help improve the lives of the poor.

Among other topics, special attention was given to national experiences in developing the MPI, navigating political transitions, and how the measures could be used for policy action and how to report the measures for tracking progress towards the SDGs.



1.- 2019 MPPN annual meeting participants 2.- President of Seychelles Danny Faure receiving a digital copy of the pilot MPI report from CEO of the National Bureau of Statistics Laura Ahtime 3.- Alvin Laurence, Principal Secretary for Poverty Alleviation, Ministry of Family Affairs of Seychelles 4.- Yemi Kale, Statistician General of the National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria 5.- Mouna Osman Aden, Minister of Social Affairs and Government Solidarity of Djibouti 6.- Tan Weiping, Deputy Director of the International Poverty Reduction Centre in China 7.- One of the MPPN meeting sessions.

www.mppn.org/mppn2019



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