

High Level Event

Anchoring a Universal Multidimensional Poverty Index within the Sustainable Development Goals

New York, 27 September 2015

CONCEPT NOTE

Introduction:

Poverty is a complex and multidimensional phenomena that goes beyond the simple lack of income. A *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, in which the overarching goal is to end poverty in all its forms and everywhere, must therefore properly address this reality. Ending \$1.25/day poverty alone is unlikely to mean the end of the many overlapping disadvantages faced by people living in poverty, including malnutrition, poor sanitation, lack of electricity, or ramshackle schools, among others. Additionally, complexity can stall momentum.

The international community thus need to coordinate efforts to reduce poverty in all its forms, at least by half (as indicated by target 1.2 of the new Sustainable Development Goals). Furthermore, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda calls on the UN System to develop transparent measurements of progress on sustainable development that go beyond per capita income, building on existing initiatives. In this regard, the establishment of a global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) as a core (tier one) indicator within the SDGs would help track how people are poor (what disadvantages they experience at the same time); to which regions or ethnic groups they belong; and on inequalities among those living in poverty. By tracking progress in reaching target 1.2 it would provide comparisons across countries on multidimensional poverty.

By showing how different dimensions of poverty overlap and interconnect, the measure can help to break apart the silos of poverty reduction. And because it shows which groups or regions are experiencing poverty most acutely, it can focus attention on the most vulnerable populations, helping to ensure no one is left behind. It could also provide political incentives to reduce the many different aspects of poverty together and would reward effective interventions. It could also incorporate economic, social and environmental dimensions of poverty, including other important sustainability concerns.

The concept of multidimensional poverty is now widely accepted and the MPI is a tool that is made up of factors that constitute poor people's experience of deprivation by looking concretely at the deprivations he or she experiences. In this regard, the new SDGs have broadened the concept of poverty to include multidimensional poverty. To concretize this more

holistic conception of poverty, the interest is now in adopting a global MPI for the measurement of target 1.2. Ministers and senior officials of around 40 countries participating in the Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network (MPPN) have endorsed the proposed global MPI as a way forward for this task.

Background:

So far, the governments of Colombia, Chile and Bhutan, as well as the state of Minas Gerais in Brazil and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, have adopted official multidimensional poverty measures. And a rapidly increasing number of new countries, including Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Pakistan, Philippines, Malaysia, Tunisia and Vietnam, are developing their own MPIs. At the United Nations, the Human Development Report Office, along with the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) has pioneered an initial version of the global MPI since 2010. Today, the concept of multidimensional poverty is included in Goal One of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Clearly, the idea that poverty is about more than just income is now widely accepted.

The high-level event “Anchoring a Universal Multidimensional Poverty Index within the SDGs” will highlight the existing work and thinking being undertaken on multidimensional poverty by participating governments.

The session will build on the work that began at the 68th UN General Assembly in 2013, which has been subsequently developed and deepened by the MPPN, OPHI, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and various offices of the United Nations. The event will present practical tools for building a new, global MPI specifically for the SDGs and show the level of interest and commitments of governments in this regard. Discussion will be held on how international agencies and governments can work together to implement such a new measure. New interests and commitments of international agencies will be highlighted.

“We are almost blind when the metrics on which action is based are ill-designed... For many purposes, we need better metrics.” Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen & Jean-Paul Fitoussi

Expected outcomes:

Outcome 1

Presentation and discussion of specific options for addressing and implementing a new global MPI as a core (tier one) indicator to support the monitoring of SDG target 1.2.

Outcome 2

Presentation and discussion of the relationship between a new universal MPI and national MPIs, building on the work of the governments that have or are implementing multidimensional measures of poverty.

Outcome 3

Exchange on how the various actors of the international community (governments, international organizations, academia, civil society and the private sector) can contribute to the institutionalization of multidimensional poverty measurement into the post-2015 sustainable development framework.

Format:

The High Level Event will take the format of an interactive meeting, hosted by H.E. Mr. Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera, President of Costa Rica, with support of the MPPN and OPHI. The participation is expected to be at the highest level possible. The event will take place on Sunday, 27th September 2015 from 1:15-2:45 p.m. in the margins of the United Nations Summit to Adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda and will be held in Conference Room 3 (CR 3) at the UN Headquarters.

Guiding questions:

In order to facilitate the discussion, participants might refer to the following questions:

- Why a multidimensional approach on poverty?
- What are countries doing to address multidimensional challenges?
- What should be the role of the UN system towards these efforts?
- How can this measure support the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

