Comment on Target 1.2 from Academic Stakeholder

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Target 1.2: By 2030, 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.

Target 1.2 has two indicators:

1.2.1 Proportion of population living below the national poverty line by sex and age

1.2.2 Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

Comments: Target 1.2. has three motivations:

a) To give a headline alongside income poverty that shows how, as Amartya Sen puts it, poor peoples lives are "battered and diminished" in many ways at the same time – the multidimensionality of poverty
b) To reduce poverty in all its dimensions by at least half
c) To report national definitions.

The indicators admirably reflect c). Both are entirely national indicators, which reflect country contexts but which cannot be compared.

However it is not clear that the motivation of profiling and reducing 'at least by half' multidimensional poverty is well-served by using national indicators.

To give one example in terms of multidimensional poverty, Mexico's official poverty measure published by CONEVAL is 46.2%. This implies that Mexico has to reduce its poverty to 23.1% by 2030. Contrast this with Bhutan's most recent Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) by national definitions, which is 12.6%. This implies Bhutan needs to cut its MPI to 6.3%. However Bhutan is a far poorer country than Mexico. According to the comparable global MPI (published by UNDP annually since 2010), 27% of Bhutanese live in acute multidimensional poverty, whereas for Mexico that number is only 2.8%. So in this case, the effect of imposing the target of 'reducing at least by half' on national definitions is that the target may not be focused on the poorest.

The proposal had been earlier that 1.2 have two indicators, one to reflect national definitions of multidimensional poverty. The other indicator, which is the one that should be reduced by half, would be a comparable MPI, such as the global MPI.

This situation would be very much like the use of the $1.90/day poverty measure. That poverty measure is computed for 118 developing countries using data from 2000 and later; the global MPI has been computed for 117 countries. The .do files to compute the global MPI are freely available for countries to download. The global MPI can be and has been disaggregated by region, gender, age, ethnicity, disability, and other variables. It would complement the existing indicators and its reduction by half would, indeed, realize a great benefit to the poorest.