Measuring gender differences in multidimensional child poverty: Tracking progress toward the SDGs

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OVERVIEW

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Multidimensional child poverty and the SDGs

• International consensus that poverty is multidimensional
  • Limitations to monetary approach
  • SDG 1.2.2 Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions
• Recognition that child poverty should be measured independently of adult poverty
  • Children’s needs are different than adults
  • Material deprivations in childhood have lifelong consequences
What defines that a child is multidimensionally poor?

Child Poverty
- Nutrition
- Education
- Water and Sanitation
- Health
- Housing
- Information

Child right violations
- Child labor
- Child marriage
- Adolescent pregnancy
- Violence, etc.

**NOT POVERTY**
Gender differences in existing poverty estimates

• Many empirical advances in individual-level measurement of MD child poverty
• But no significant gender differences observed. Why?
• Proposal 1 -> few actual gender differences in material deprivation, esp. in early childhood
• Proposal 2 -> absence of observed gender differences due to construction of measures
  • Some dimensions measured at household level & “allocated” to children therein
  • Individual-level indicators selected without attention to which ones might best capture gender disparities
Approaches to measuring child poverty from a gender perspective

• Construct different measures with different indicators for girls and boys

• Construct one measure but include girl-specific and/or boy-specific indicators
  • E.g. access to essential maternal health care/menstrual hygiene products

• Construct one measure but assign different thresholds of deprivation for girls and boys for select indicators

• Construct one measure w/ same thresholds for all indicators but include additional indicators that are “gender-informed”
  • Challenges of data availability
  • But we hypothesize that gender differences in poverty should be observed among older adolescents
Methodology

• Dimensions and indicators
  – Base measure: Education, nutrition, health, water, sanitation, housing & information
  – Enhanced measure: Incorporation of new indicators into nutrition, water & information dimensions
    • Anemia prevalence
    • Whether child spends time fetching water
    • Mobile phone ownership

• Countries and data sources
  – Sierra Leone and Laos, MICS 6
  – Haiti and Guyana, DHS-VI/DHS-V

• Unit of analysis
  – Child aged 0-17 years
    • Three age groups: 0-4, 5-14, and 15-17
Multidimensional child poverty measures

• We follow the “counting approach”
  – A child is considered to be multidimensional poor if he/she suffers from deprivation in at least one dimension

• We compute two aggregate indexes
  – The multidimensional headcount ratio (proportion of poor), which accounts for incidence
  – The average number of deprivations suffered by the poor, which accounts for intensity of multidimensional poverty
The incidence of multidimensional child poverty among adolescents aged 15-17 (Gender gaps in relative terms)
The intensity of multidimensional child poverty among adolescents aged 15-17 (Gender gaps in relative terms)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Baseline Measure</th>
<th>Enhanced Measure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>1.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
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<td>1.05</td>
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<td>Haiti</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
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</table>
Preliminary conclusions

• It is possible to derive estimates of child poverty in which statistically significant differences between (adolescent) girls and boys are observed
  – Results suggest that observed differences are related to different experiences of girls and boys, not to construction of measure or choice of indicators

• Gender-sensitive design of child poverty measures can provide policymakers with more detailed understanding of how girls and boys may experience poverty differently

• But analysis of material deprivation from a gender perspective may be less revealing than analysis of quality of life/well-being
Implications

• Disaggregating poverty measures by sex alone may be insufficient for capturing gender differences due to intersectional inequalities the most marginalized face.

• The challenge of finding indicators to undertake gender-sensitive analysis of child poverty relates, in part, to the availability of data in standard surveys.

• Both issues point to important data gaps on the situation of girls and boys.
  – Better data are needed to ensure neither is left behind in the 2030 Agenda.
THANK YOU

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