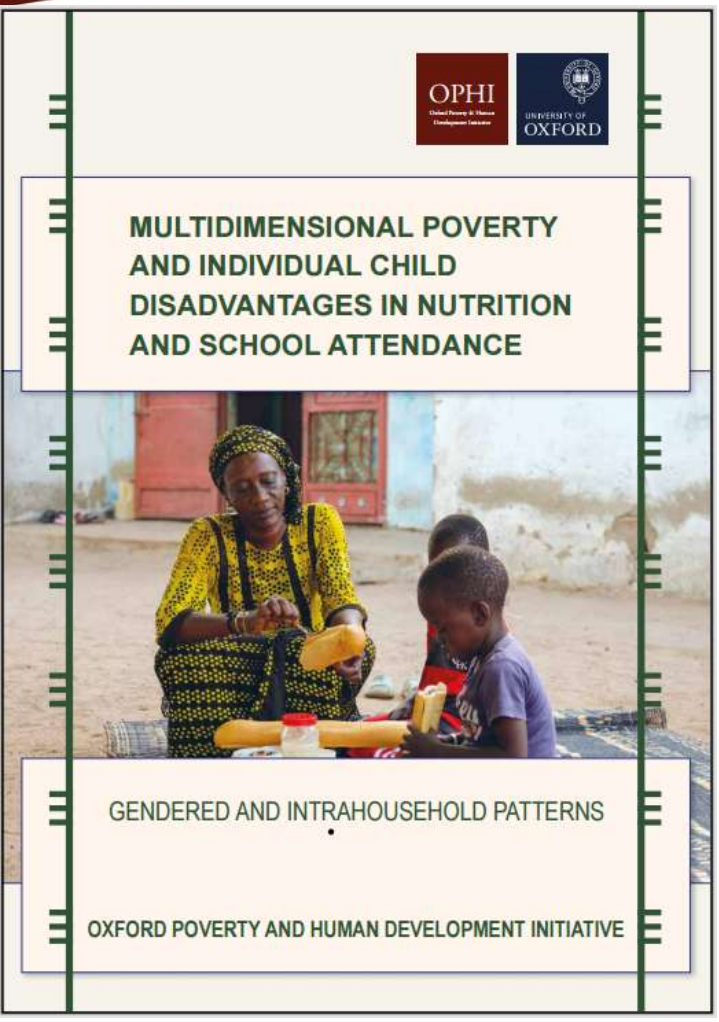
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# Multidimensional Poverty and Individual Child Disadvantages in Nutrition and School Attendance: Gendered and Intrahousehold Patterns

Sabina Alkire, Rizwan Ul Haq, with Ana Vaz

17 Nov 2026, MPPN Call.

# Why are we sharing this report?

1) **It includes country-level data that may be of interest**
2) **It demonstrates a technique that can be used with national MPIs**

- It examines boys' and girls' disadvantages in:
  - Nutrition – undernutrition among children under 5
  - School attendance – school exclusion among school-aged children

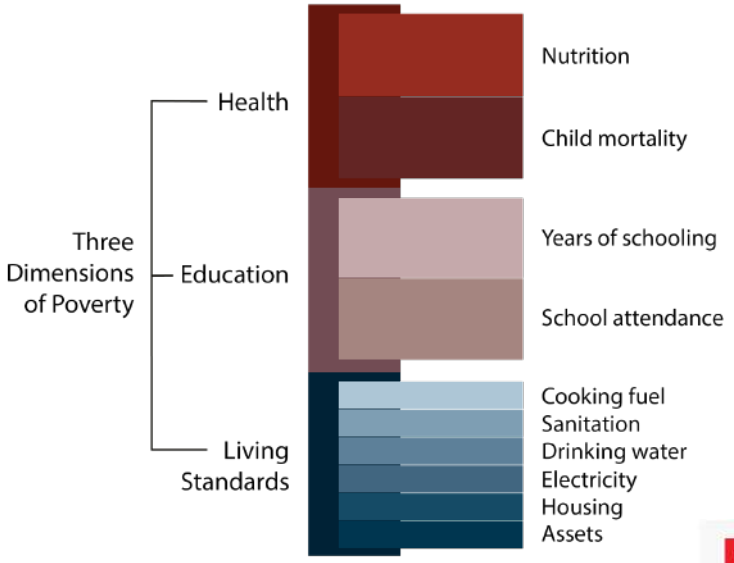
- And relates them to:
  - **Multidimensional poverty** – which disadvantaged children live in poor households by global MPI?
  - **Gender Disparities –** in which countries are girls or boys more disadvantaged?
  - **Adult schooling in the household** – what is the educational environment of disadvantaged children?
  - **Other children in the household** – do all children in the household face the same disadvantages?
  - **Other deprivations** that afflict poor disadvantaged children at the same time.

- **National MPIs can carry out similar analyses with data that fulfil these 3 criteria:**
  1. They are available for multiple eligible household members
  2. They reflect the individual person status – in employment, education, health, pensions, etc.
  3. Each person can be coded as disadvantaged or not (unemployed, malnourished etc).

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**The global MPI**: a measure of acute multidimensional poverty covering 10 indicators in health, education, and living standards, published by UNDP and OPHI since 2010. Covers 92% of the population of the majority world.




| DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY | INDICATOR | SDG AREA | DEPRIVED IF... | WEIGHT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Health | Nutrition | SDG 2 | Any person under 70 years of age for whom there is nutritional information is undernourished. | 1/6 |
| | Child mortality | SDG 3 | Any child has died in the family in the five-year period preceding the survey. | 1/6 |
| Education | Years of schooling | SDG 4 | No household member aged 10 years or older has completed six years of schooling. | 1/6 |
| | School attendance | SDG 4 | Any school-aged child[+] is not attending school up to the age at which he/she would complete class 8. | 1/6 |
| Living Standards | Cooking fuel | SDG 7 | A household cooks with dung, agricultural crop, shrubs, wood, charcoal or coal. | 1/18 |
| | Sanitation | SDG 11 | The household's sanitation facility is not improved (according to SDG guidelines) or it is improved but shared with other households. | 1/18 |
| | Drinking water | SDG 6 | The household does not have access to improved drinking water (according to SDG guidelines) or safe drinking water is at least a 30-minute walk from home, roundtrip. | 1/18 |
| | Electricity | SDG 7 | The household has no electricity. | 1/18 |
| | Housing | SDG 11 | The household has inadequate housing: the floor is of natural materials or the roof or walls are of rudimentary materials. | 1/18 |
| | Assets | SDG 1 | The household does not own more than one of these assets: radio, TV, telephone, computer, animal cart, bicycle, motorbike, or refrigerator, and does not own a car or truck. | 1/18 |

# Uncovering the individual disadvantages that underlie the global MPI: Definitions

The word 'disadvantage' specifies that this particular individual is personally affected.

• **Undernutrition**: A child aged 0 to 4 years (below 60 months) is disadvantaged in nutrition if that child is underweight and/or stunted. They are considered undernourished if their z-score of either height-for-age (**stunting**) and/or weight-for-age (**underweight**) is below minus two standard deviations from the median of the reference population.

• **Out-of-school child**: A school-aged child is out of school if that child is not attending school up to the age at which they should complete **class 8** and has not completed class 8. The data source for the age that children start compulsory primary school is the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2026). For most of the countries, it covers children aged 6 to 14.

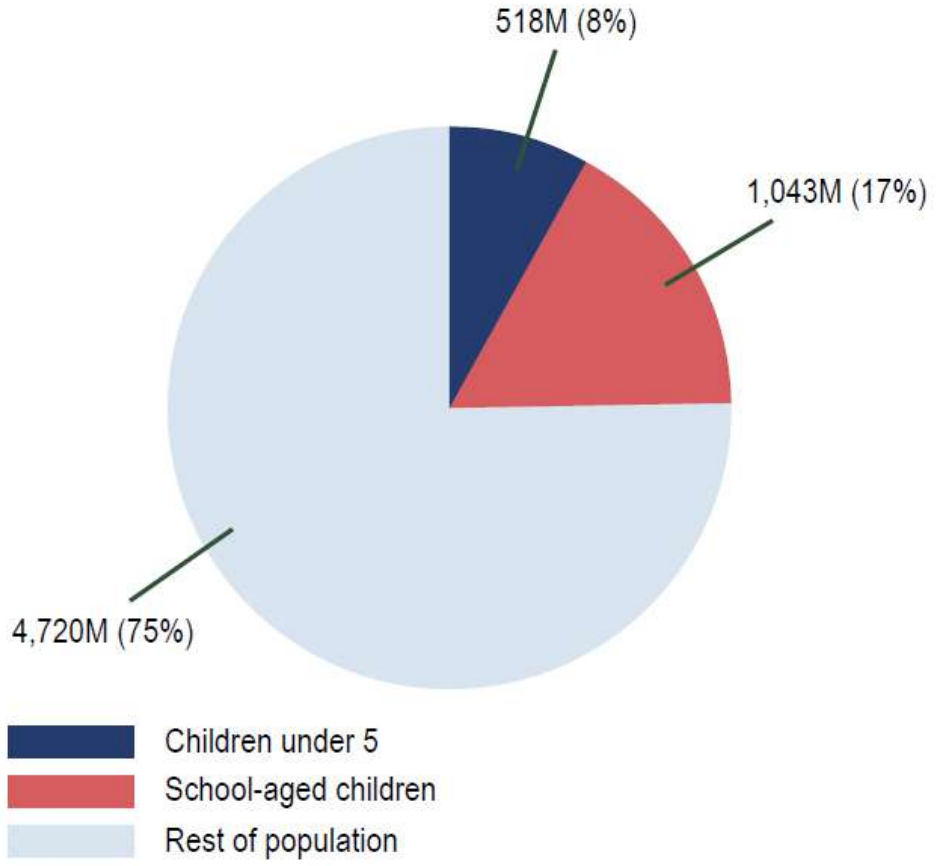
• **Years of schooling**: If a peron has not completed six years of schooling, they are considered disadvantaged in years of schooling. In the global MPI, this variable is considered for all household members aged school-entry plus six years of age. To analyse individual adult education, this report separately analyses adults' and children's schooling.

# The report focuses on 518 million children under 5 and 1,043 million school-aged children, which together represent 25% of the total population covered by the Global MPI

**The Global MPI 2025 identifies 1.1 billion people as poor.**

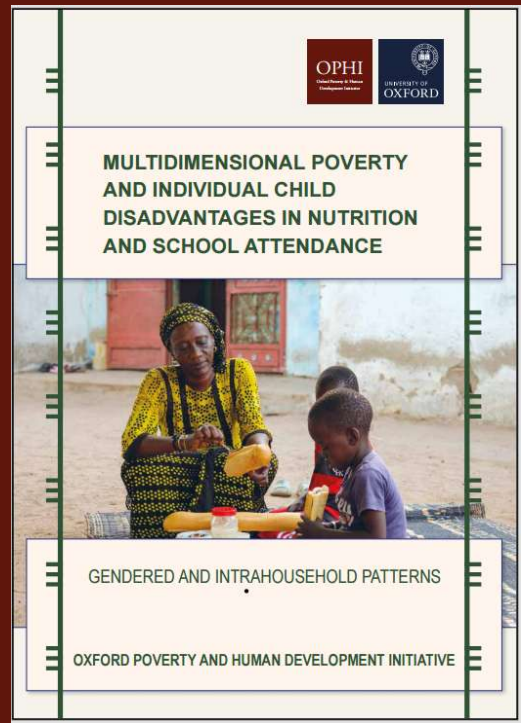
**Half of these are children.**

**This report's 2 age cohorts cover about 80% of these poor children.**



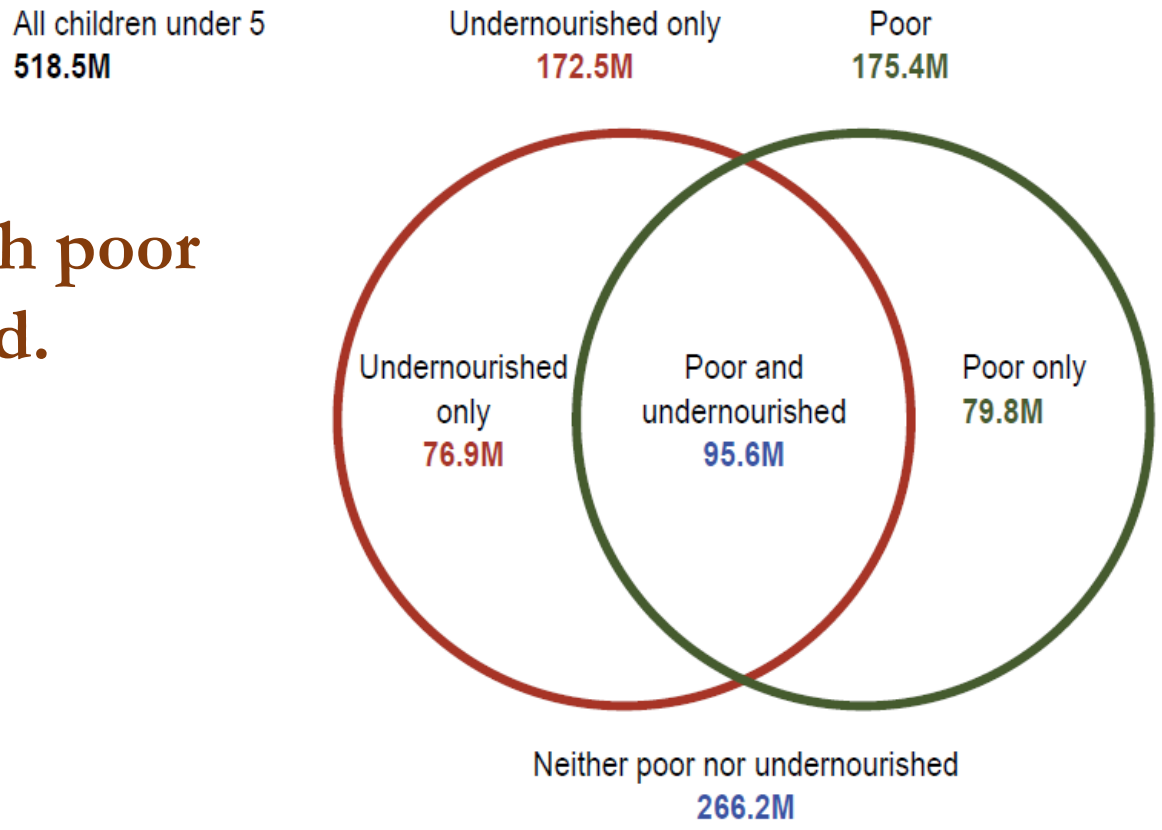
# Children's individual disadvantages and

# Multidimensional Poverty



# Globally, nearly half of all children under 5 are undernourished, multidimensionally poor or both.

95.6 million are both poor and undernourished.

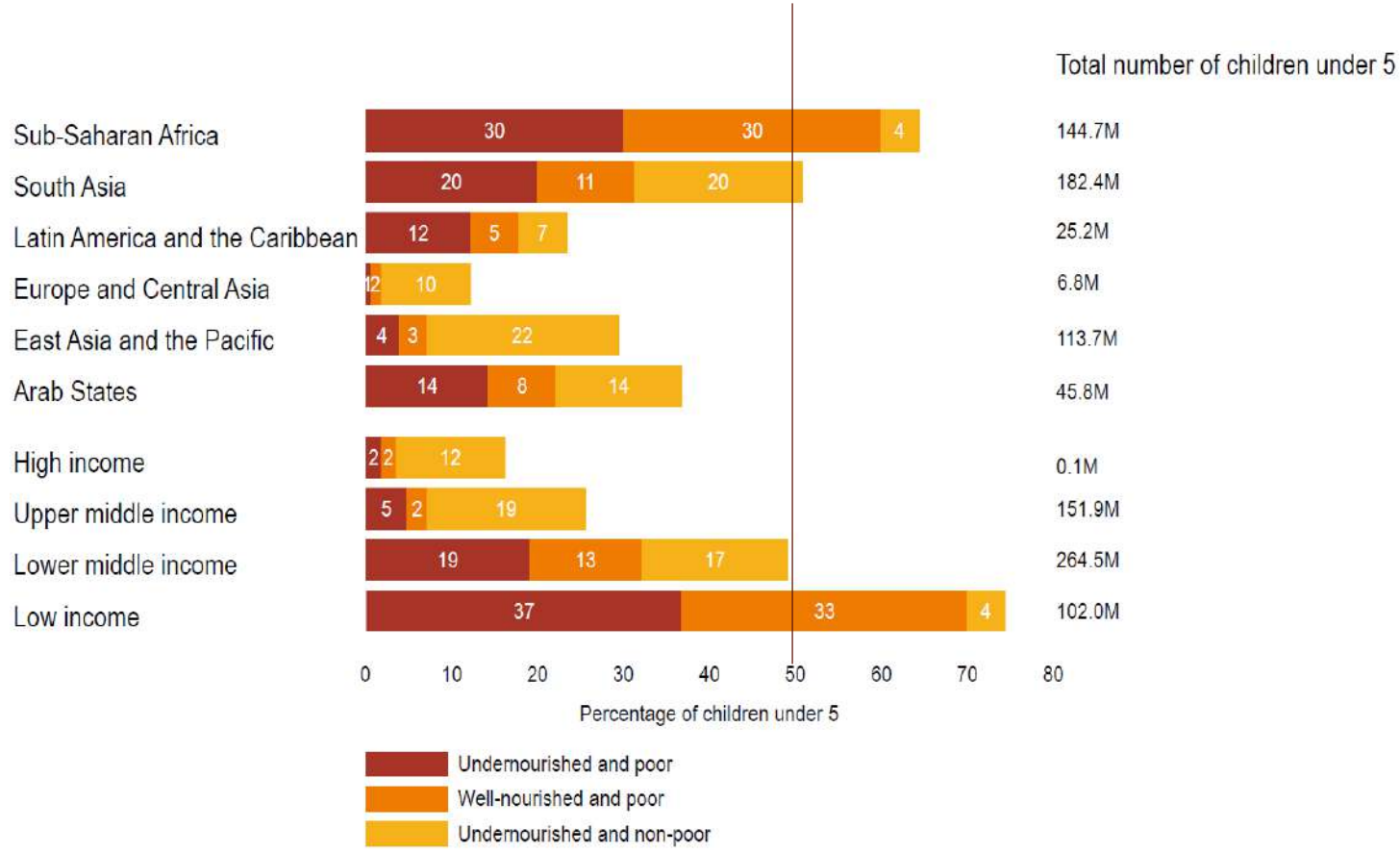


# Sub-Saharan Africa and Low-Income Countries have the largest proportions of children who are both undernourished and multidimensionally poor

In Sub-Saharan Africa, 87% of undernourished children are poor

In LAC, it's next highest: 63%

In all world regions, nearly half to two-thirds of all poor children are individually undernourished





Amartya Sen, responding to "the general sense of pessimism and defeatism" about child undernutrition, writes:

There is, in fact, little factual basis for such pessimism and no grounds at all for assuming the immutability of hunger and deprivation.

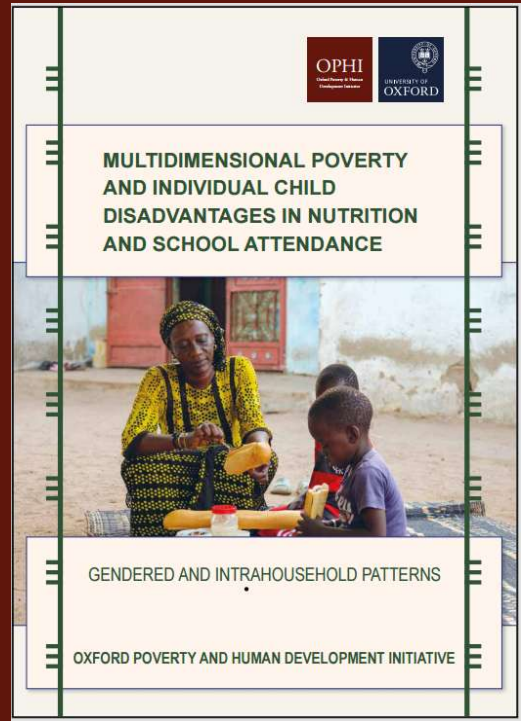
Amartya Sen



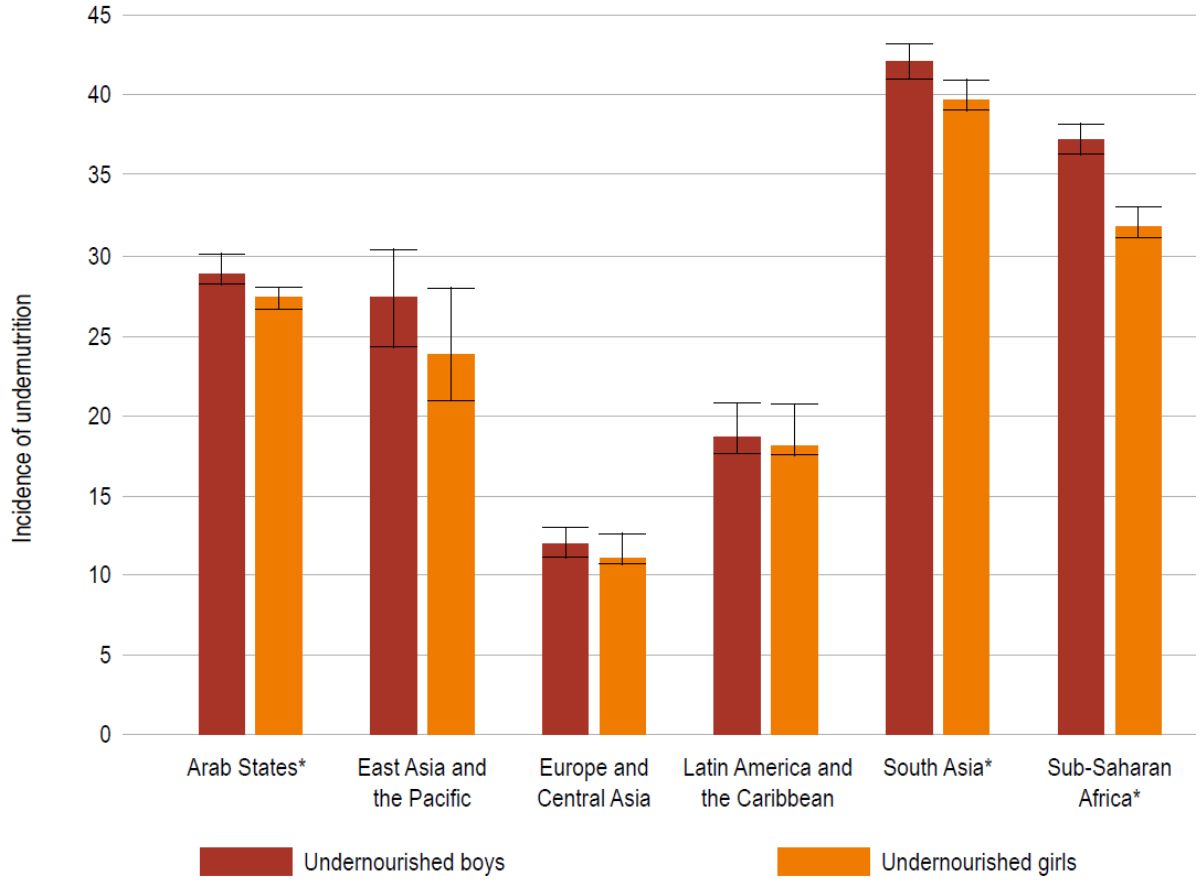

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# Children's individual disadvantages and

# Gender Disparity

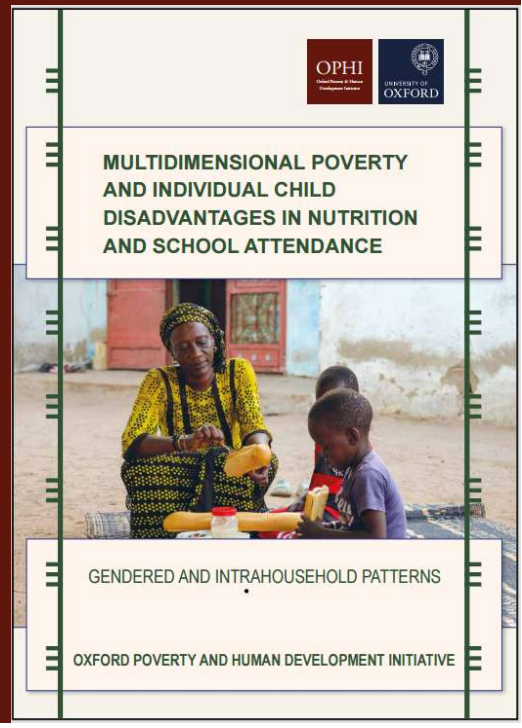


# In all world regions, a higher share and number of boys under the age of 5 are undernourished than girls, with the largest gap in sub-Saharan Africa

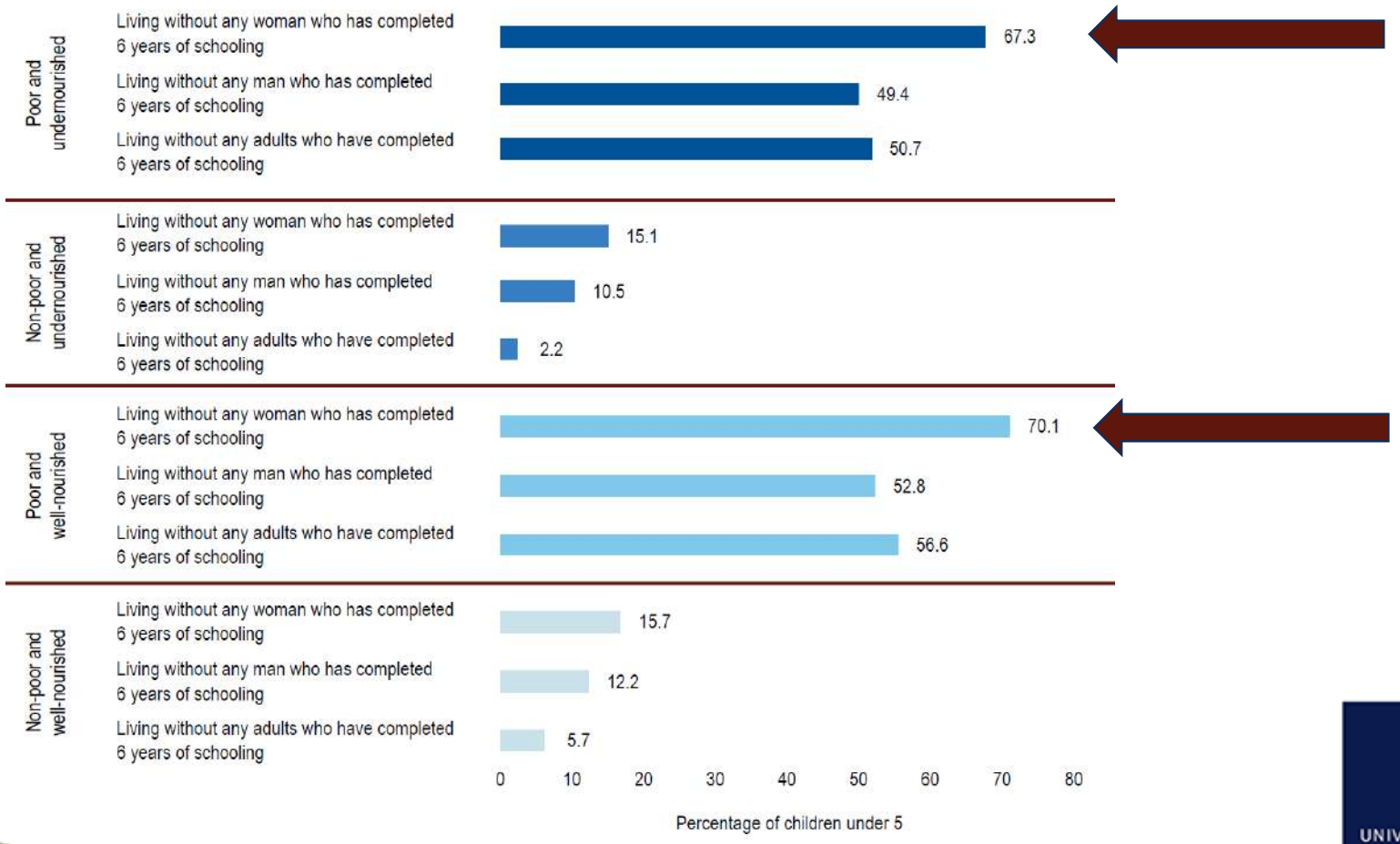


# Children's individual disadvantages and

# Adult Schooling in the Household

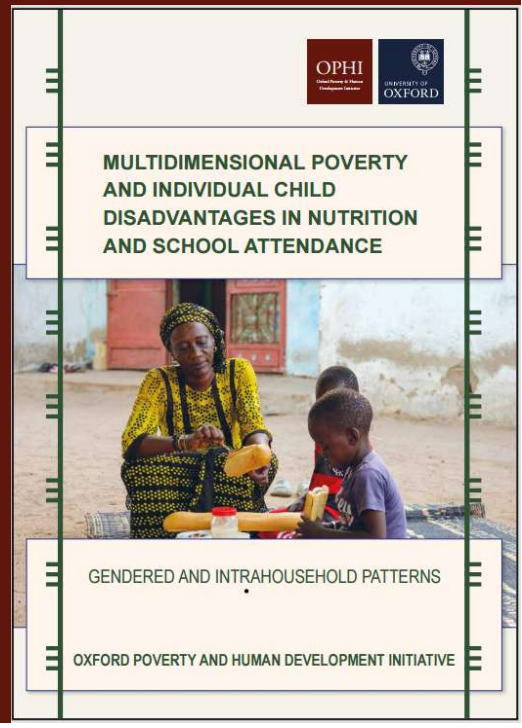


# Two-thirds of poor children under 5 live in households where no woman has completed 6 years of schooling



# Children's individual disadvantages and

# Other Children their age at home



# Glaring disparities: over one-third of poor children experience intra-household inequality

The report examines whether all children within the same household are all disadvantaged or not disadvantaged, or if there is inequality.

**Over one-third of poor children under five live in a household in which at least one child is undernourished and another is not.**

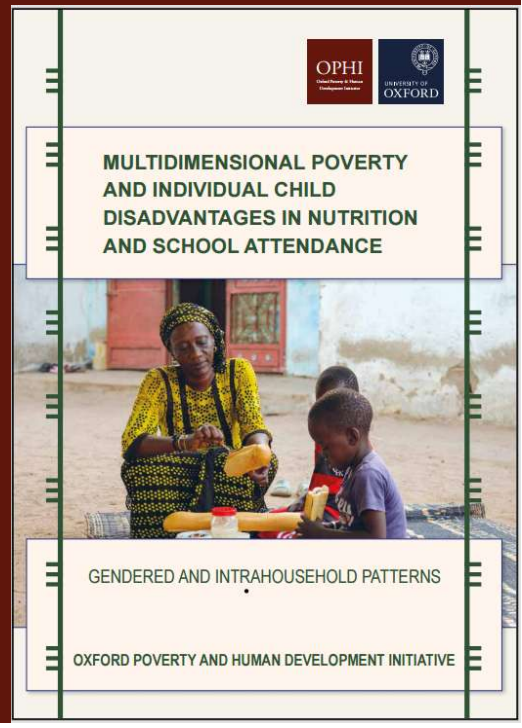


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This illuminates a poignant need to plan integrated programmes that recognise that poverty may be experienced unequally at home.

# Children's individual disadvantages and

# Other Deprvations They Carry



**We have been studying individual disadvantages of children, and whether or not they are multidimensionally poor.**
**We've looked at other children's deprivations at home.**
**And at adults' levels of schooling at home.**

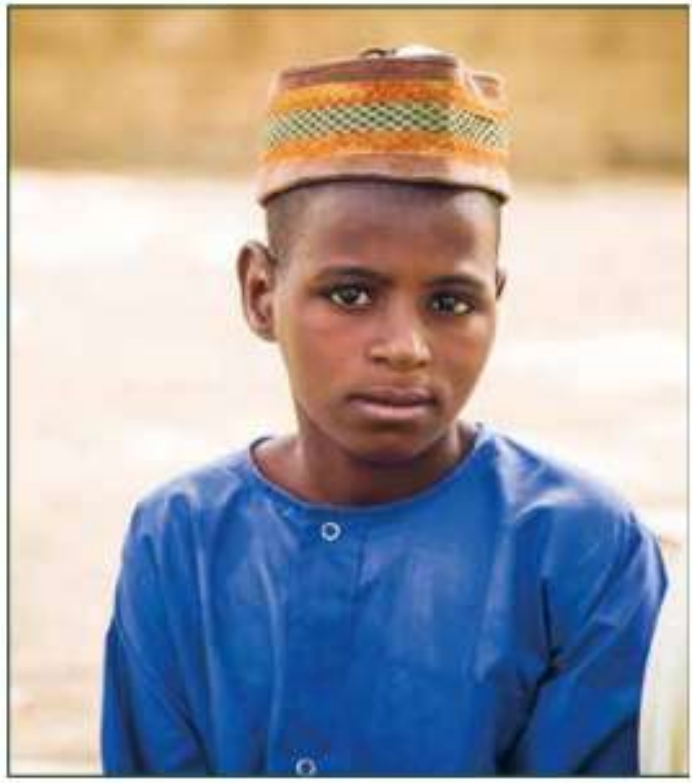


**But what is their lived experience of poverty?**

Now we shine a light into their *multidimensional poverty*

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# Individual disadvantages do not strike alone.



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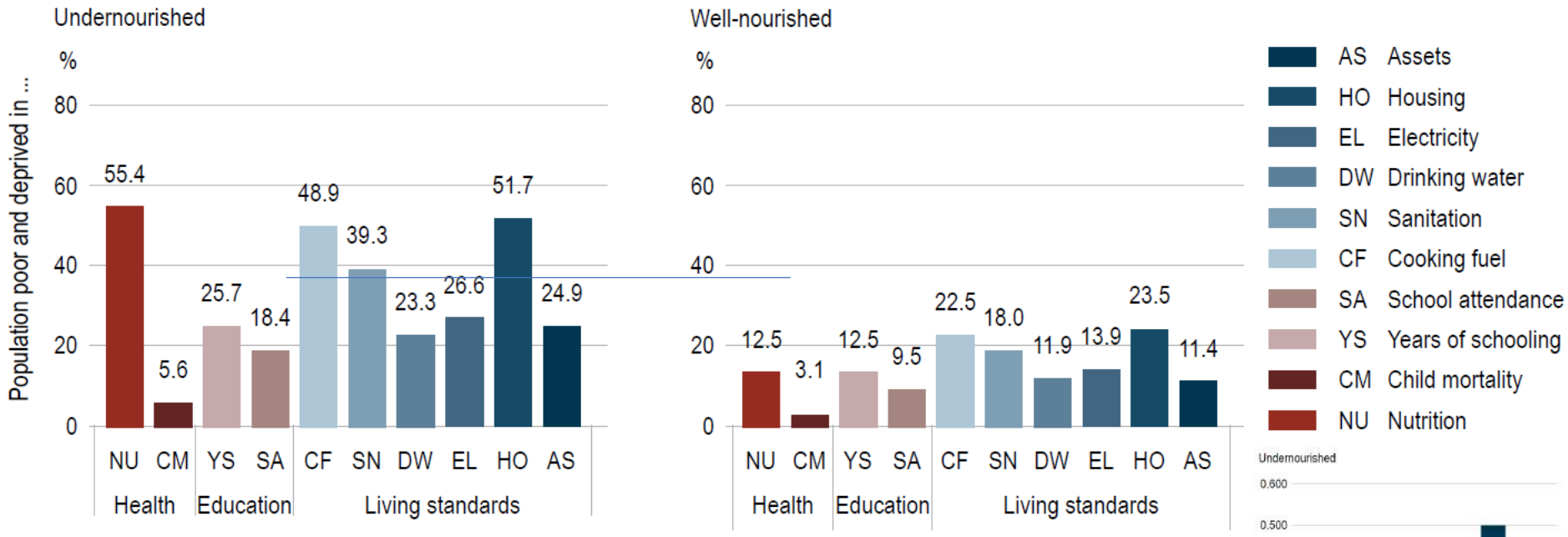
**Each poor and undernourished child experiences on average four to five deprivations in addition to being undernourished themselves.**

**Each poor and out-of-school child experiences an average of five additional deprivations**

Child poverty is often called multidimensional. This study pinpoints *how*, by the global MPI indicators.

## Percent of undernourished children who are poor deprived in each indicator.

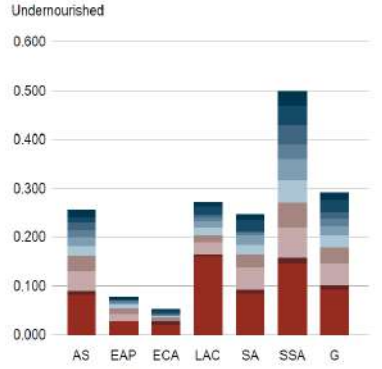
## Percent of well-nourished children who are poor & deprived in each indicator.

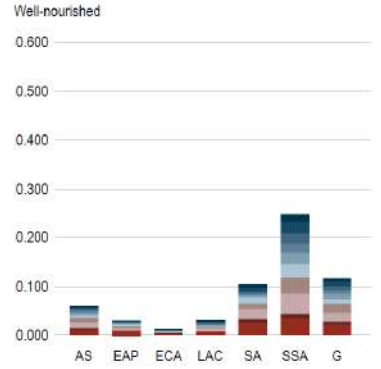


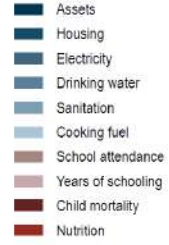







AS Arab States
EAP East Asia and the Pacific
ECA Europe and Central Asia
LAC Latin America and the Caribbean
SA South Asia
SSA Sub-Saharan Africa
G Global

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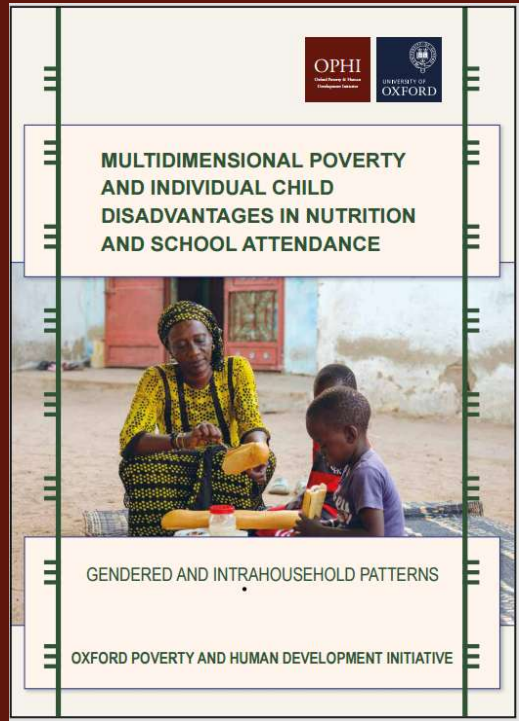


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**It is ultimately in the poverty of the lives that people can lead that poverty manifests itself.**

**Sudhir Anand and Amartya Sen**

# Pioneer Children



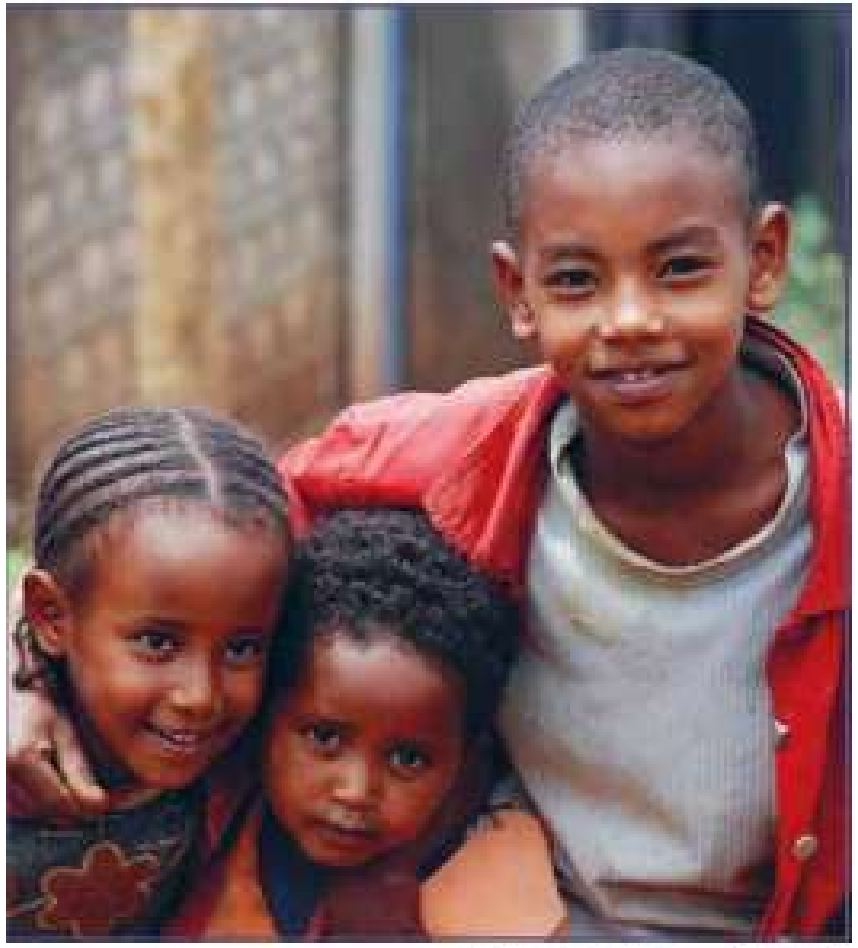
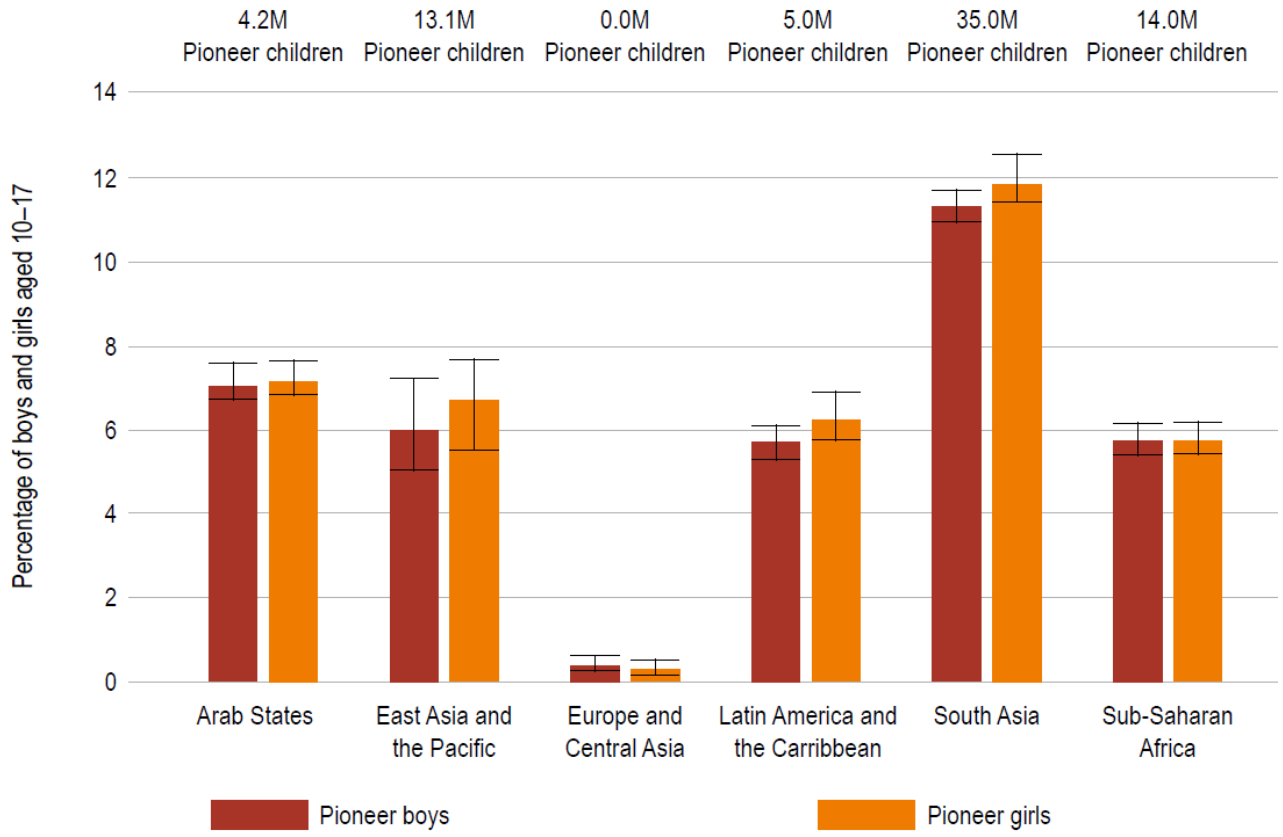


Photo: Lead Beyond, CC BY-0

A pioneer child is a child who lives in a household in which no adult aged 18 and above has completed six years of schooling, whereas that individual child has completed six years of schooling

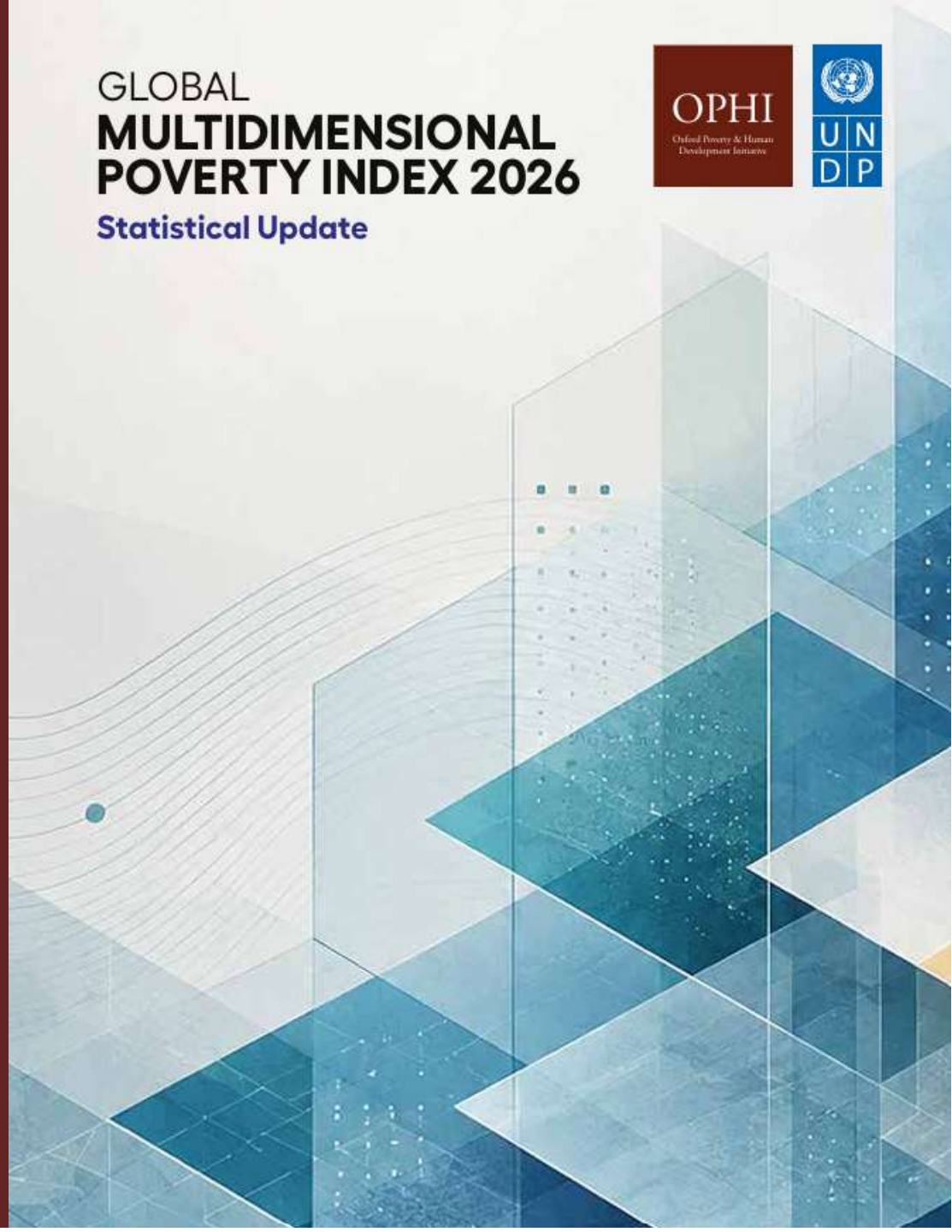
# Across 899 million children aged 10-17, one in 12 children are pioneer children – *the only generation with 6 years of schooling.*

# No region has significant gender disparity



Launched October 2026

# GLOBAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX (MPI) 2026



**Launched 14 Oct 2026:** Building on ECA Policy Brief, we extended it using the global MPI 2026, and also included $3/day and monetary and multidimensional measures.



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

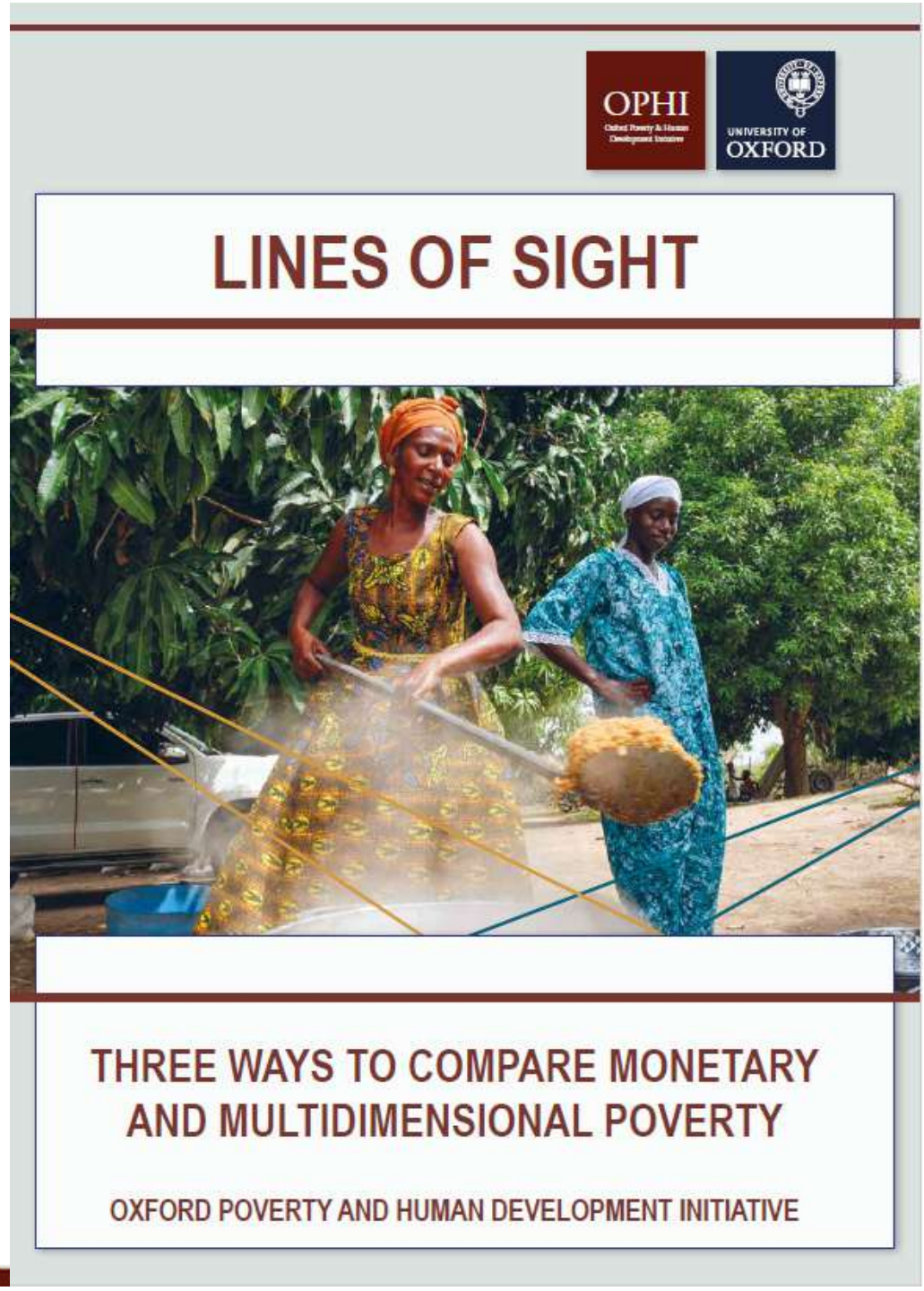
ECA POLICY BRIEF

## Tracking progress made in reducing poverty in Africa: a multidimensional perspective

Poverty is widely recognized as one of the most significant challenges facing humanity. In contrast with widely held negative perceptions, many African countries have made great strides in reducing poverty in its various forms. The narrative on poverty in Africa is often bleak, with countries on the continent considered to be either lagging or left behind. After all, the African continent is home to the majority of the world's people who are living in extreme poverty, according to the

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was launched in 2015, has reached the final third of its duration. The most ambitious of the Sustainable Development Goals therein is Goal 1, which is to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. That Goal is directly geared towards addressing poverty in all its complexity.

Practically speaking, poverty is measured using monetary metrics and multidimensional metrics. Monetary poverty is traditionally tracked using the metrics for extreme poverty that have been developed by the World Bank. The standardized measurement uses the international extreme poverty line of $3 per day and uses 2021 purchasing power parity for global comparisons.[1] The monetary measurement is used to report on target 1.1 of Goal 1.[2]



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LINES OF SIGHT

THREE WAYS TO COMPARE MONETARY AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY

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# Four measures:

## Global measures enable comparison

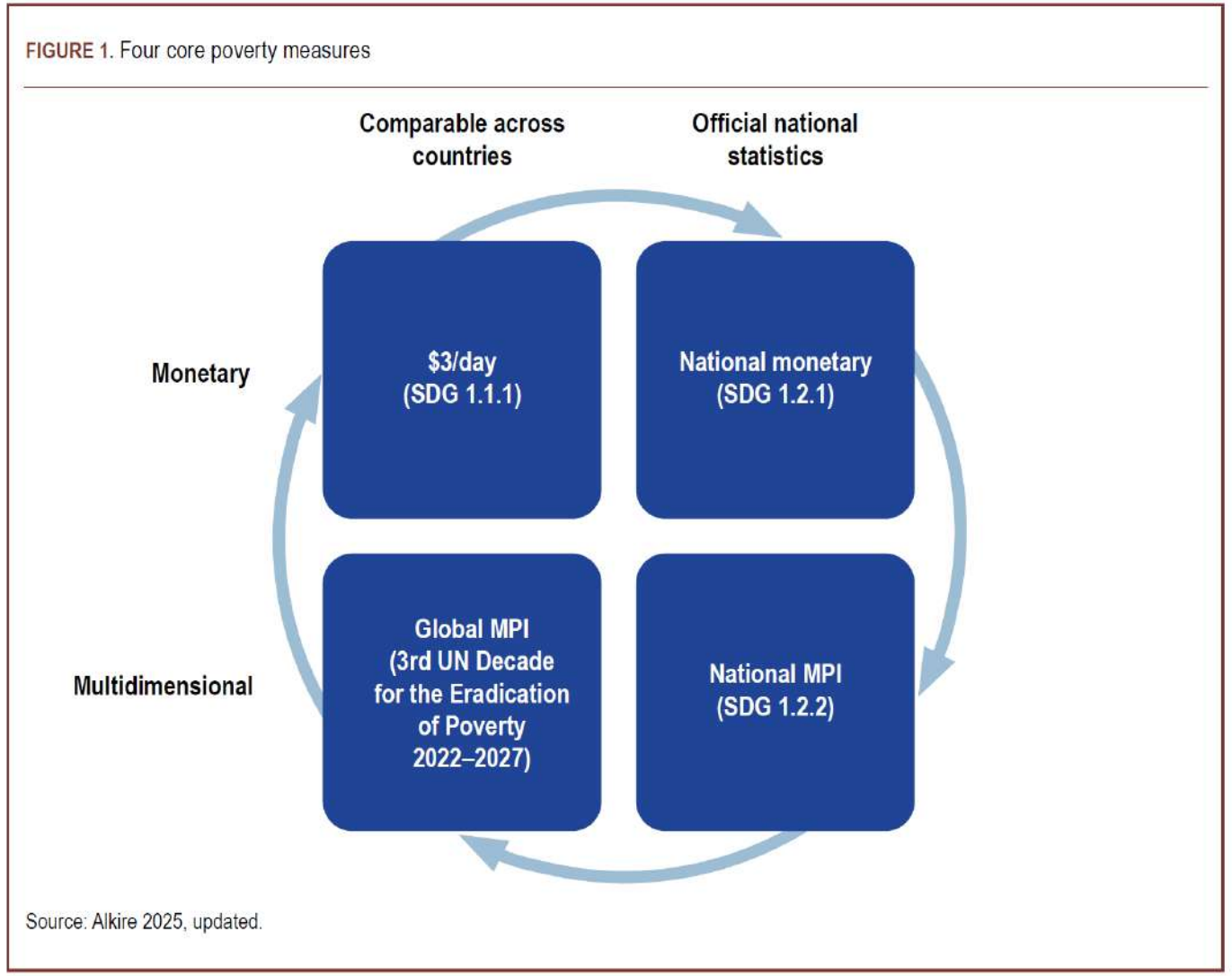
## National measures guide domestic policy

**Global Monetary ($3/day, etc)**
Comparable, shows command over economic resources

**Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (gMPI)**
Comparable, shows direct deprivations in health, education and living standards

**National Monetary**
Designed for national monetary priorities and policy

**National MPI**
Designed for national poverty priorities and policies




**No one measure can perform all four functions.**

# Why are we sharing this report?

1) **It includes country-level data that may be of interest**
2) **It demonstrates a technique that can be used with national MPIs**

**National MPIs can carry out similar analyses with data that fulfil these 3 criteria:**

1. They are available for multiple eligible household members
2. They reflect the individual person status – in employment, education, health, pensions, etc.
3. Each person can be coded as disadvantaged or not (unemployed, malnourished etc).

**Our hope is that National and Regional MPI reports going forward will include a chapter analysing these patterns for their individual indicators.**

**Other techniques for cutting-edge National MPI Reports:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Linked Child MPI | Overlay Climate Hazards | Overlay Conflict |
| Simulate Reduction | Examine Deprivation Bundles | Target Households |

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# Thank you!

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