

Solutions Session **Advancing universal social protection through digital transformation:**

Insights from the Digital Convergence Initiative (DCI)



**SECOND
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FOR SOCIAL
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DOHA 2025

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MODERATOR

Shahra Razavi

Director of the Social
Protection Department
International Labour Organization



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OPENING REMARKS

Charles Katoanga

Director of Inclusive
Social Development
UN DESA



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KEYNOTE

Sabina Alkire

Director of Oxford Poverty and
Human Development Initiative
University of Oxford



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Advancing Universal Social Protection through Digital Transformation

Sabina Alkire, Univ of Oxford, 5 November 2025
Second World Summit on Social Development, Doha Qatar

Tabitha, Kenya



Rabiya, India



Stéphanie, Madagascar



Agathe, Madagascar



Dalma, Kenya



Ann-Sophia, Kenya



Valérie, Kenya



Universal Social Protection

Social protection exists to help people move out of poverty and stay out
- by providing cash and in-kind transfers, social insurance and job support.

Roughly 2 billion people lack sufficient social protection (WB 2025)

For social protection to work well, we need to understand poverty as it is actually lived, which includes but goes beyond poverty as a lack of income.

Nobel Laureate in Economics: Angus Deaton:



[High-income] countries underline the importance of monetary indicators of poverty being accompanied by nonmonetary indicators”

‘It is easy to think of the escape from poverty as being about money—about having more and not having to live with the gnawing anxiety of not knowing whether there will be enough tomorrow.’ (p xiii).

But ‘the story of human wellbeing, of what makes life worth living, is not well served by looking only at a part of what is important.’

cited in Atkinson 2019, p22.



Multidimensional Poverty: derived from lived experience.

National MPIs — which are present across the world — bring under one roof people's overlapping deprivations in health, education, housing, work, and access to essential services. Some National MPIs include shocks from climate or conflict. Chapters address child poverty and gender analyses. All MPI reports give:

- ◇ A Headline — so one knows if poverty has gone up, down or stayed the same
- ◇ Disaggregation by age, subnational region, rural/urban and other groups
- ◇ Indicator composition — showing what interlinked deprivations poor people face.

Seeing poverty in this broader way helps design systems that respond to people's real circumstances.



Using MPI to set Actionable Subnational Priorities

Number of people living in households affected by each deprivation. Dark shade show the 4 deprivations that contribute most to MPI; light shades have next-highest contribution

Region of the Country

MPI	0.307	MPI	0.307	0.420	0.131	0.231	0.497	0.282	0.209	0.084	0.456	0.148	0.350
School attendance	166,102	School attendance	166,102	156,648	223,289	122,692	198,432	255,087	115,655	1,015,506	202,817	74,506	112,737
Female schooling	71,760	Female schooling	71,760	74,029	125,067	78,456	111,258	114,011	56,882	415,729	108,040	31,311	51,387
Male schooling	53,545	Male schooling	53,545	58,769	49,982	49,402	71,803	90,199	42,449	227,549	57,988	16,135	15,082
Food security	207,576	Food security	207,576	187,395	155,145	58,320	78,778	367,508	83,336	704,509	185,389	54,951	97,744
Assisted delivery	182,570	Assisted delivery	182,570	151,813	81,605	154,294	174,640	36,223	30,474	27,104	11,033	16,004	54,230
Access to water	9,562	Access to water	9,562	243	14,644	-	-	57,902	38,520	46,978	74,792	13,220	32,513
Sanitation	5,896	Sanitation	5,896	8,505	24,278	17,654	24,789	73,372	57,740	68,652	97,089	140,277	28,959
Electricity	1,617	Electricity	1,617	21,618	68,247	55,585	18,827	98,597	13,407	153,876	49,356	17,230	12,664
Cooking fuel	68,514	Cooking fuel	68,514	56,828	25,397	32,890	67,521	108,024	11,614	116,301	11,150	12,273	17,877
Housing	24,288	Housing	24,288	26,409	60,701	28,320	45,083	43,780	24,378	263,933	62,376	14,016	39,561
Assets	15,492	Assets	15,492	59,525	110,537	11,733	18,797	117,849	8,233	296,810	50,373	11,113	18,743
Dependency	80,257	Dependency	80,257	101,879	101,146	19,981	95,744	199,107	4,097	333,426	53,237	36,620	14,799
Unemployment	18,221	Unemployment	18,221	106,688	256,144	26,067	152,676	93,868	33,050	335,968	22,165	20,528	7,814
Underemployment	55,034	Underemployment	55,034										
Youth NEET	33,169	Youth NEET	33,169										
Production	64,652	Production	64,652										
Income	90,241	Income	90,241										
Security	9,238	Security	9,238										

Indicator in the MPI

Boxes show the number of poor people affected.
Dark orange observe the 4 top challenges per region

Table 6. Number of affected people and policy priorities, by province

IsDBI-OPH

No. 7
October 2022

MULTIDIMENSIONAL
AFGHANISTAN
Policy-oriented
the 2020 Afghan
Expenditure and

Islamic Development Bank
Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative

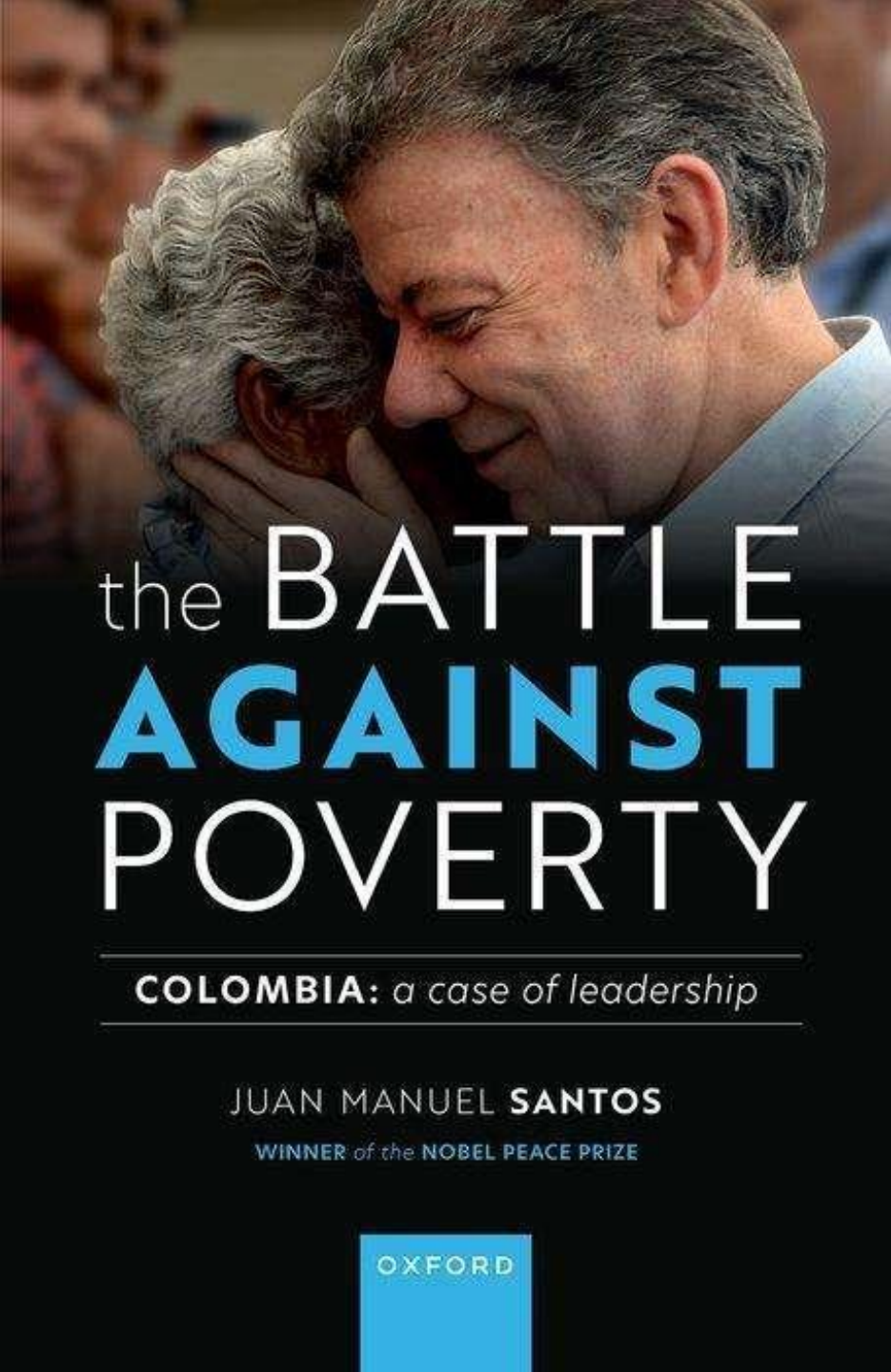


50+ Countries have some kind of Natl MPI ; 20+ are in progress

Afghanistan
Angola
Armenia
Bangladesh
Belize
Bhutan
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cabo Verde
Colombia
Costa Rica
Djibouti
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Ghana
Guatemala

Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Honduras
India
Iraq
Jamaica
Kyrgyzstan
Lebanon
Madagascar
Malawi
Malaysia
Maldives
Mali
Mauritania
Mexico
Moldova
Morocco
Mozambique

Namibia
Nepal
Nigeria
Pakistan
Palestine
Panama
Paraguay
Rwanda
Samoa
Sierra Leone
Somalia
South Africa
Sri Lanka
Suriname
Thailand
Uganda
Uruguay
USA Vietnam



the BATTLE AGAINST POVERTY

COLOMBIA: *a case of leadership*

JUAN MANUEL SANTOS

WINNER of the NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

OXFORD

2023 OUP book by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Juan Manuel Santos describes use of the Colombia MPI in Policy

Colombia's MPI reduced	2010: 29.7%	2018: 19.1%
Monetary poverty also fell	2009: 40.3%	2018: 27.0%

The Book addresses:

What actions were taken in Colombia to reduce poverty?

How was this done in the middle of complex **peace negotiations**?

“The fight against poverty is not just a technical issue but one of **leadership**.”

“In the case of Colombia, as president, I personally took on directing and supervising **social policy**, and this undoubtedly made a difference.”

How?

Leadership ~ Data ~ Management ~ Case workers ~ Bottom-up

Using MPI for Targeting in Colombia

1. As a criteria for **social protection** programs

- Colombia **targets at the household level** using social registry data, and addresses hh deprivations
- The C-MPI and the extreme poverty line are **two criteria to graduate households** from the safety net Unidos.

2. For **geographic targeting** tool for social programs

- In 2017, the National Planning Department (DNP) found that, according to the 2005 population census, the MPI was 72.8% in PDET municipalities, well above the national average of 49% (DNP, 2017, p. 10)
- They introduced geographic differentiation in the conditional cash transfers (Families in Action Plus)
- MPI was a diagnostic tool for regional development plans elaborated by the DNP and local governments
- MPI was used to count the number of beneficiaries per municipality in several programs from the DPS

Leadership, Management, and Poverty Reduction in Colombia

Colombia established a RoundTable led by the President with each Minister attending meetings in person. The DPS staffed its secretariat. It monitored progress in each MPI indicator plus income and inequality, and each year unplugged bottlenecks to progress. Santos wrote,

“Why did we establish the Poverty Roundtable? When a new public policy is set, one that breaks away from the traditional way in which a priority issue—such as poverty—is being tackled, the policy’s good performance depends on continuous and close supervision. When faced with a proposed change, every bureaucratic apparatus tends to go back to the traditional way of doing things, to the previous and familiar model. And we didn’t want that to happen. That’s why it was important to establish a coordination mechanism, led by the president himself, **so we could ensure senior government officials remained committed** to the new guidelines for the policy on poverty”

Colombia: Case Workers addressed social protection gaps

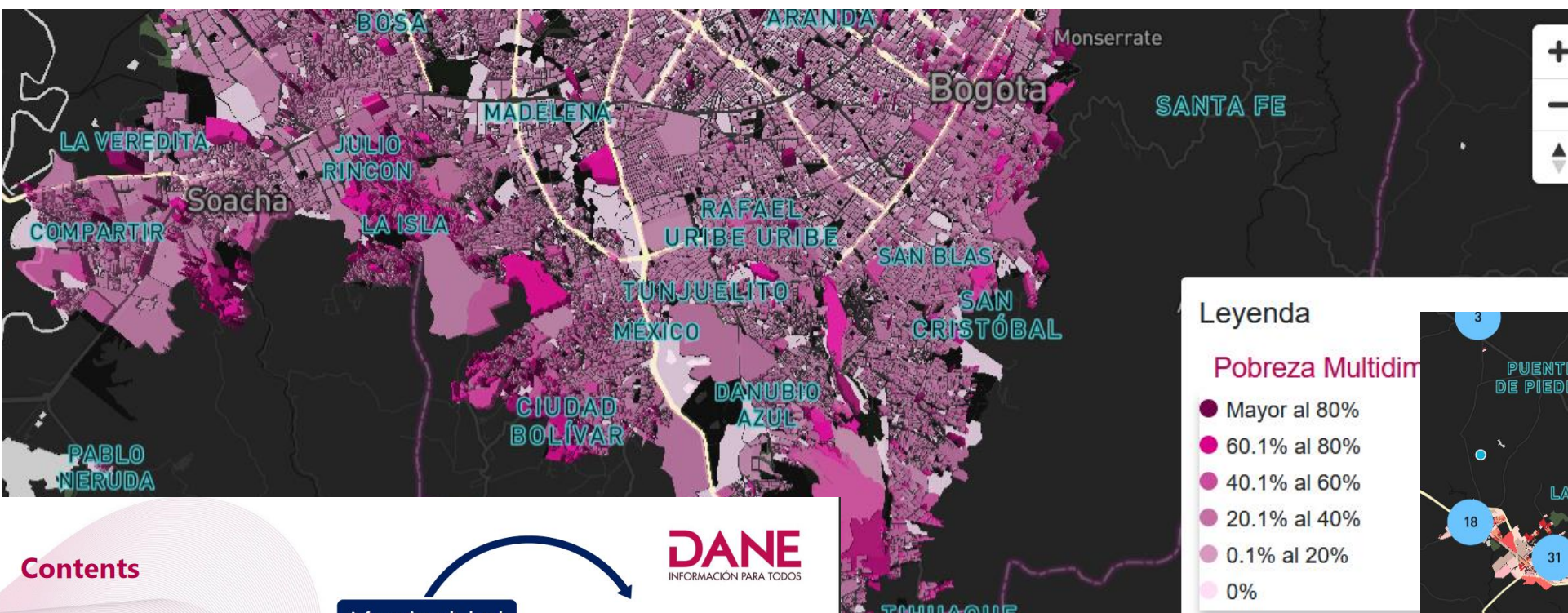
The main tool to accomplish poverty reduction objectives was the Red Unidos (United Network), which operates through a large group of caseworkers—more than 10,000—who President Santos called “my social army.”

Caseworkers implemented a door to door survey of 45 basic achievements in nine intervention areas: income and employment, livability, access to banking services and savings, nutrition, family dynamics, health, identification, access to justice, and education. They identified MPI and monetary poor persons.

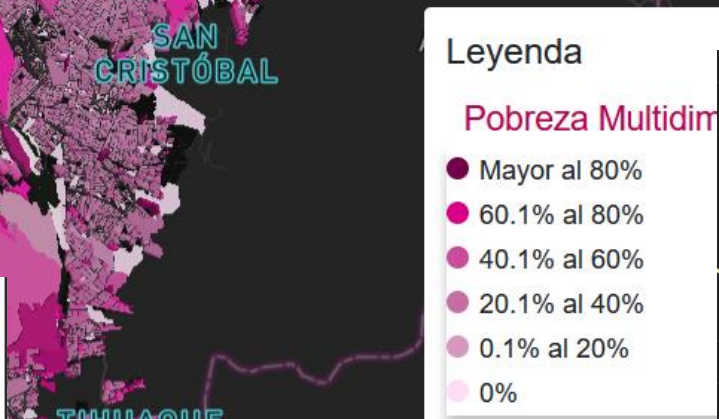
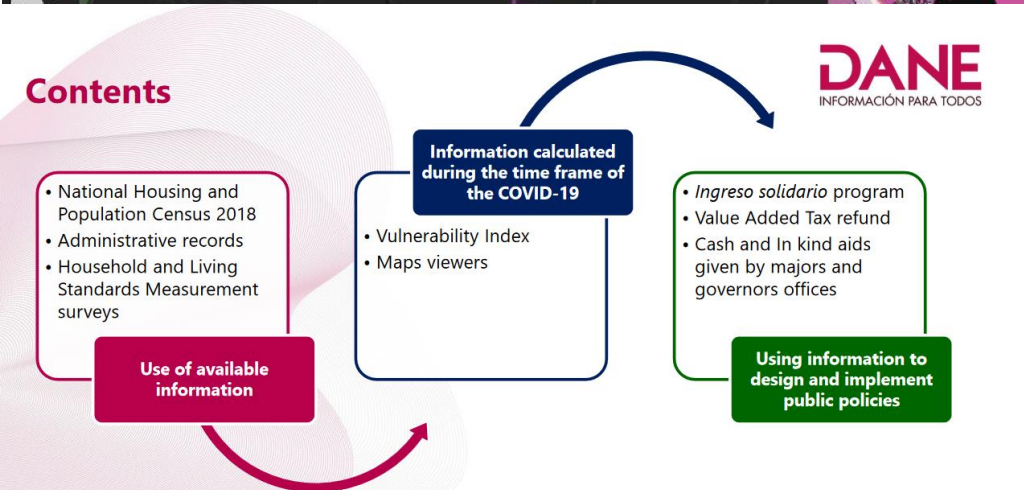
The caseworker wd establish a personalized follow-up plan with the poor or vulnerable family, visit periodically to check progress and troubleshoot obstacles until they left both multidimensional and monetary poverty. Santos wrote:

“These case workers served to “ground” social policy, turning documents and good intentions into action in the very place where policy can be effectively implemented. This is a clear example of a multisectoral policy integrated at the individual level. And its success laid precisely in this integration. Household deprivations cannot be treated in isolation as they are interwoven.”

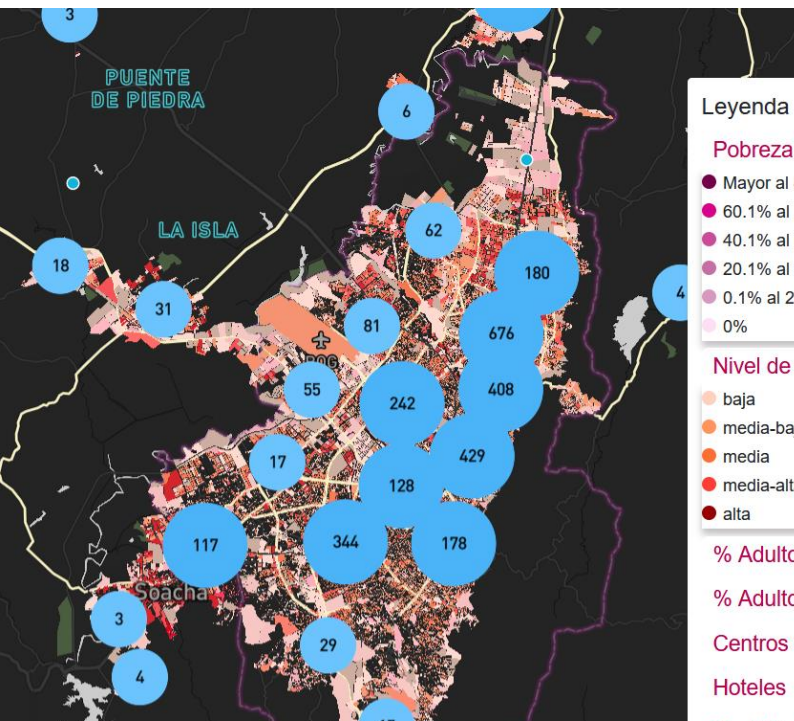
Colombia geospatially merged MPI data with data on health clinics and vulnerabilities during the pandemic. Later it used admin data on school attendance; new innovations are en route.



By April 2020 DANE added health clinics, pandemic data etc to track contagion and minimize impact.



From website of DANE, Govt of Colombia



Going forward: Digitalisation and Inter-operability

- § Social registries, poverty censuses or eligibility surveys remain essential for household targeting. But **the data frontier is fast changing**. Innovations are underway to:
 - § Merge health and bank records data with targeting data using individual ids to shorten surveys.
 - § Use growth monitoring data to include children's nutritional status
 - § Use admin data on school attendance (and shortly, on many other topics from housing to work to skills)
 - § Provide interoperability by flowing all these data through the individual or hh id.
- § **Breakthroughs** are coming very fast. This is important — especially if it **increases frequency** and **saves costs**.
- § **Engagement of leaders is key** — in part so they understand the importance of maintaining any admin data sources
- § **Engagement of case workers is key** — in part so they have the power and channels to triangulate, troubleshoot, and correct records within an accountability framework

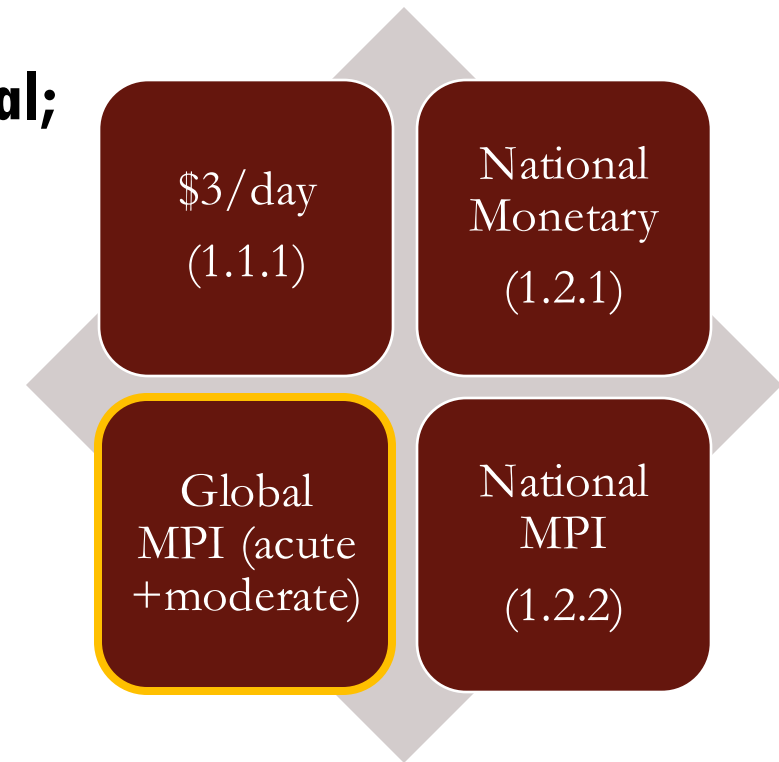
Going forward: Digitalisation and Inter-operability

- § Universal digitalisation and interoperability is **harder than it looks**, especially for the poorest.
- § **Safeguards** are essential — to keep data secure, ensure sensitive data is only used for good.
- § **Strategies need to address documented challenges** (e.g. fingerprints; tech failures; time and cost to register or reach facilities; facilities for the elderly, those living with disability/health issues)

Poverty remains the greatest global challenge.

It deserves clearer reporting of policy-salient metrics, and effective trends tracking, at high resolution to see clearly who is being left behind

- **Report 4 main poverty measures: Monetary & Multidimensional; Global and Nationally-tailored**
- **Track absolute, relative and number-of-poor reductions, so the poorest contexts can show success.**
- **Disaggregate extensively, and use the directly interlinked deprivations to inform highly efficient and impactful actions.**
- **Invest intentionally in communicating poverty facts to inform public action by multiple actors, including new actors.**



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H.E. Samedy
Deputy Secretary-General
**National Social Protection
Council, Cambodia**



Rafael Osorio
Secretary of Assessment,
Information Management
and Single Registry
**Ministry of Social
Development and Fight
against Hunger, Brazil**



Momodou K Dibba
Executive Director
**National Social Protection
Agency, The Gambia**



Li Andersson
Chair of the
Committee on
Employment and
Social Affairs
European Parliament



Jamele Rigolini
Senior Advisor for Social
Protection and Labor
World Bank



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Chair of the
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European Parliament



Jamele Rigolini
Senior Advisor for Social
Protection and Labor
World Bank

CLOSING REMARKS

Erica Gerretsen

Director of DG INTPA Directorate G
Human Development, Migration,
Governance and Peace
European Commission



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

