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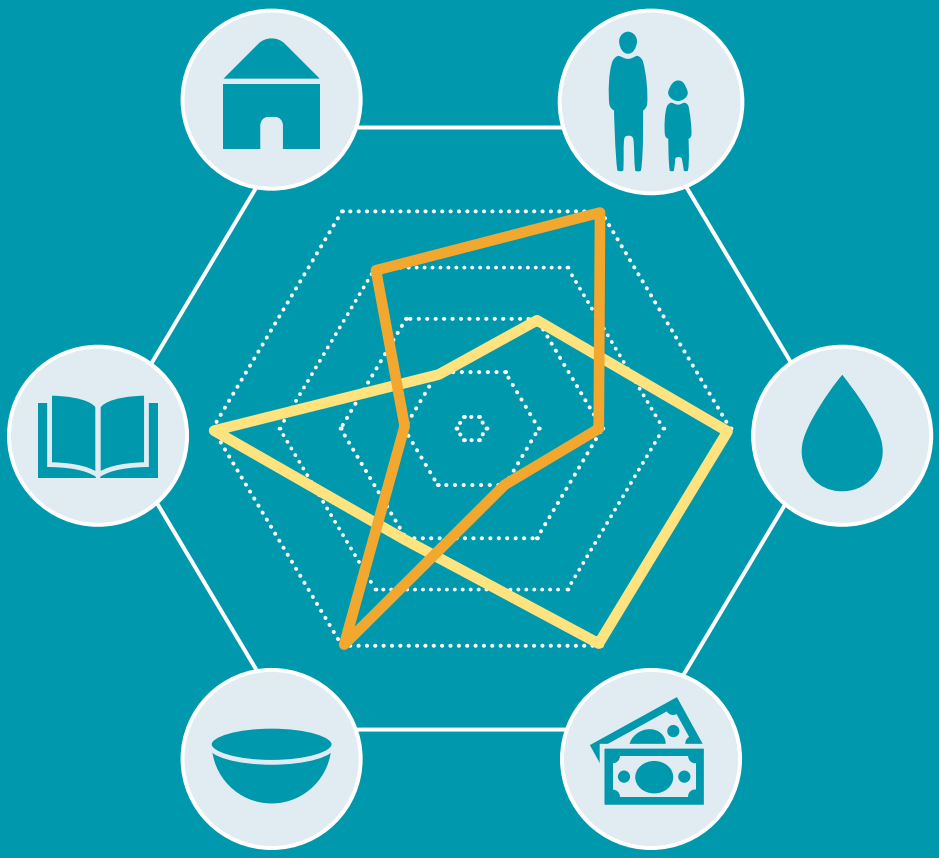

MEASURING RURAL POVERTY WITH A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH

The Rural Multidimensional Poverty Index

OPHI
Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative

FAO STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES 19

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FOREWORD

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) are pleased to release this joint report, which presents the conceptual development and empirical validation of a multidimensional poverty index specific to rural areas: the Rural Multidimensional Poverty Index, or R-MPI.

Ending poverty and hunger are central goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as of most national development agendas. Existing evidence indicates that rural areas are home to most of the poor worldwide, and agriculture is central to the livelihoods and food security of these population groups.

As a partner in ending hunger and poverty, FAO works with countries to develop and implement evidence-based policies, strategies and programmes in the areas of its mandate – namely food, agriculture and the sustainable management of natural resources – that promote inclusive growth and sustainable livelihoods, thereby fighting rural poverty. Designing more comprehensive and dedicated approaches to target the poor in rural areas, requires, as a first step, identification of who the poor are, where they live and what specific constraints prevent them from escaping poverty.

In recent times, multidimensional poverty measures have become widely accepted as tools to overcome the limitations of unidimensional metrics, such as monetary poverty measures. They bring into view the joint distribution of direct deprivations that a person or household experiences. As such, the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027) uses both global monetary and multidimensional poverty indices to track trends. Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 1.2.2 reports countries' national multidimensional poverty metrics.

In this context, FAO and OPHI joined forces to harness the strength of FAO's expertise and knowledge of rural contexts and the experience of OPHI in measuring poverty, with the aim of improving the conceptualization of poverty in rural areas, while proposing, discussing and testing the R-MPI, a new multidimensional measure. This effort was driven by the contributions of a number of experts who participated in a consultation held in Oxford in 2019, and some of whom have followed the progress through to the results presented in this report.

Relying on a multidimensional approach, the work included in this report fills an important gap in the measurement of poverty. While a range of poverty measures exist and are commonly used at the aggregate level, harmonized information on rural poverty, which could inform a sound and

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