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Title: A Multidimensional Impact Evaluation: An Empirical Application to Progresa in Mexico  

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reflected two shifts that have been taking place in the context of social policy. First, it recognized that poverty has a multidimensional nature (Sustainable Development Goal 1); second, it emphasized intersectoral linkages and the need to adopt integrated approaches to policy-making (UN General Assembly, 2015). In this context, it is expected that more social protection schemes and poverty reduction programs will include interventions in different domains (e.g. education, health, etc.) and/or be expected to have multiple simultaneous effects (e.g. increase school attendance, reduce child labor, reduce child malnutrition, etc.). Standard impact evaluation practice is to measure the average effect of the program on each of the outcome indicators separately (e.g. rate of school enrollment, rate of child labor, children’s average calorie intake, etc.), making appropriate adjustments to avoid multiple inference errors. This approach, however, does not allow us to conclude that the program’s goals were achieved simultaneously; it does not enable us to see if the children who started attending school are the same as those who stopped working, or the same who started eating more. This paper argues that the Alkire-Foster (AF) methodology for multidimensional poverty measurement, with indicators and weights chosen to reflect the objectives of the program, provides a more appropriate measure of its performance. By focusing the evaluation on the individual rather than on the indicator, it allows us to have a better perception of whether the program is lifting people out of poverty, instead of having impacts on scattered indicators. This paper, first, introduces a framework to use the AF method in impact evaluation and discusses a number of complementary analyses that can be conducted to better understand the effects of the policy intervention. Second, it presents an empirical application of the framework and further analyses to assess the impact of the conditional cash transfer program Progresa in Mexico.