Revisiting Poverty Debate: Alternative Ways for Conceptualisation, Measurement and Targeting

The contemporary discourse on international development offers many perspectives on poverty, ranging from material deprivation and that of minimum living standards to the lack of essential freedoms or fundamental capabilities that constitute individual wellbeing and agency. In addition to these perspectives primarily offered by economists, there are sociological perspectives that problematise capability discourse, and in the context of tensions between structures and agency, see poverty as individuals’ failure to ensure the security of their agency. The proposed panel will offer an insight into these perspectives. Since conceptualisation of poverty has direct bearings on the policies aimed at poverty reduction, this panel would assess the ways in which poverty is defined and measured in South Asian countries and its role in shaping poverty reduction strategies.

Measurement of poverty is intrinsically linked to its conceptualisation. At the definitional level, there is a considerable consensus that poverty is a multifaceted phenomenon. However, what constitutes this multidimensionality of poverty and how best to take this into account while measuring poverty are highly contested issues. This panel would particularly draw upon the UNDP – Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative’s recently launched measure of multidimensional poverty and provide empirical estimates. Lastly, as identification of poor for social protection programmes are linked with underlying conceptualization of poverty, the panel would also provide an assessment of methodologies adopted in the regional countries to target the poor for social safety nets.

Panel Organiser: Mr. Mohammad Arif Naveed, Senior Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad.

Email address: arif@sdpi.org