

Rethinking Poverty and Poverty Alleviation

Disasters triggered by climate change and environmental degradation make the headlines, as do wars in Ukraine, the Middle East, Sudan and dozens of other settings. Democratic backsliding and the proliferation of authoritarian regimes, rising inflation and growing economic inequalities, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic—these are not far from our collective awareness in these politically fraught times. Poverty, however, lurks behind every story of human travail, almost taken for granted as a global structural condition silently shaping these multiple crises, and in turn being exacerbated by them.

In their papers and presentations for the Rome conference, Keough School professors set the most recent data on global poverty into social and historical context. In March 2024, the World Bank estimated that 689 million people were living in extreme poverty, subsisting on less than \$2.15 a day. The burden of poverty is not distributed equally among all countries: 88 percent of the world's poor live in the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The trends are not promising. Between 1990 and 2014, more than a billion people escaped extreme poverty; the global poverty rate fell by an average of 1.1 percentage points each year, from 37.8 percent in 1990 to 11.2 percent in 2014. However, between 2014 and 2019, the pace of poverty reduction slowed to 0.6 percentage points per year—the slowest rate seen in the past three decades.¹ **Tracy Kijewski-Correa** argued that this was “an early indication that our strategy was incapable of uniformly eradicating extreme poverty.”

Lakshmi Iyer called attention to the disproportionate effects of poverty on women, particularly those in the age group 25-34. Data on human development and economic progress, she reported, show that women are disadvantaged at almost every stage of the life cycle. In some countries, gender-based marginalization begins very early, with many girls not even being born due to practices such as sex-selective abortions. Data from India and China show that 112 boys are born for every 100 girls. Globally, such population discrepancies amount to 142.6 million “missing women.”² Practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation harm several million women, and women and girls are frequently provided less medical care and have worse nutritional status compared to men and boys. While women and men have now achieved parity in secondary school enrolment rates, access to education is not yet enough to overcome the gender gaps in economic participation. Women participate in the labor market at lower rates than men and, when they do work, they earn lower wages than men. They are also under-represented in political and business leadership positions: only 27 percent of national political representatives are women, and only 52 of the large Fortune 500 companies are headed by women.

What policies can countries implement to address these gender gaps? More than 100 countries have implemented measures to increase women's representation in political office through different kinds of gender quotas.³ Comparing across countries, research finds that the adoption of a gender quota leads to increased health spending and a reduction in maternal mortality; within-country evidence similarly finds reductions in infant mortality when more women are elected to public office.⁴

Despite these documented benefits of political gender quotas, such measures may not be enough to address the myriad forms of gender inequality, Iyer said. The effects of gender quotas varies widely by context; for example, the effect of India's 1993 gender quota that mandated one-third of all local councils to be staffed by women representatives was mixed, at best, with some studies finding that the quota improved the provision of public goods such as toilets, water facilities, and schools, with other studies finding no effect and yet other studies finding lower quality of water, sanitation and education provision in areas reserved for women leaders.⁵

Similarly, the presence of women city mayors improves health and education in Brazil, but has no effect on employment or crime in the United States. Moreover, while the presence of women leaders leads to greater interest in politics among the younger generation, there is no effect on greater women's candidacy or electoral success in the short run.⁶ This suggests that we cannot rely on a virtuous cycle by which gender quotas can provide a permanent boost to women's leadership representation in a reasonable time frame, Iyer noted. In fact, once a gender quota is in place, further increases in the extent of the quota may not result in additional improvements.⁷ Even worse, in some settings, women's progress in certain careers results in a "two steps forward, one step back" situation.⁸

A basic first step towards gender equality is to make overt discrimination illegal. Unfortunately, the legal system is still biased against women in many countries. The World Bank's database on *Women, Business and the Law* shows that, in 2023, 28 of 190 countries still did not have explicit laws that prohibit employment discrimination based on gender, 41 countries did not mandate equal inheritance rights for men and women and 96 countries did not prohibit gender discrimination in access to credit.⁹ Research finds that prohibiting employment discrimination is correlated with higher permanent employment for women, but only in richer countries.¹⁰

Several researchers at the Keough School have examined the challenges to achieving gender equality globally. Using data from Myanmar, Iyer and her coauthors find that providing women legally documented land rights increases their access to bank credit, but affects their decision-making agency only in places where local leaders hold more gender-equal views.¹¹ The Keough School's Julia Kowalski's ethnographic research documents how international laws and understandings of women's rights are modified and reassessed in a local Indian context.¹²

Research by Keough School faculty has also highlighted some ways in which policies can change societal attitudes and behaviors. Aware that simple income support or child support policies are likely to be ineffective if social norms are the primary cause of the observed labor market penalties, Iyer has examined the interplay between social context and gender-targeted policies, finding that India's gender quotas have led to women victims being treated better by police officials.¹³ Abby Córdova's work shows that the presence of women's police stations has the potential to change men's views on violence against women.¹⁴

The data on gender inequality suggests several important dimensions for research progress, Iyer noted:

The first is to clearly identify the social and political contexts in which policies such as gender quotas may improve the gendered pattern of human development, and where such policies may be ineffective or even have negative consequences. Second, we need more research on the long-run effects of policies such as gender quotas or legal reforms. Third, long-lasting progress on gender equality requires changing prevailing social norms and practices. Both research and policy design must consider how and when such norms may change in ways that are beneficial for gender equality. Finally, we need to consider the inter-relationship between different types of policies, which requires a more systemic view of societal inequalities. The methods and insights from examining gendered development may enable similar analysis for other societal divides as well.

The Keough School's strengths align well with this research agenda, she concluded, thanks to the School's multidisciplinary faculty with expertise in a wide range of research methodologies and the focus on integral human development.

In pursuing this research agenda, it is important not to lose sight of signs of progress and the promise of smart policy solutions. **Ray Offenheiser** called attention to "one of the world's best kept secrets," namely, "that we have dramatically reduced global extreme poverty over the last 25 years." According to the World Bank and other monitoring agencies, global extreme poverty has fallen from 36 percent of the global population in 1990 to only 9 percent today, with only 1 in 10 people living on less than \$2.15/day.¹⁵ This is a remarkable and historic accomplishment, he noted, that exceeded even the UN's Millennium Development Goals targets, set in 2000. Extraordinary economic growth in the economies and income in China, India and a number of the other emerging economies has reshaped the map of global poverty.¹⁶

How did this happen? In the 1990s, the globalization of markets gained momentum, as China and India introduced major reforms that improved agricultural productivity and opened their economies to global trade and foreign investment. Their governments also undertook major infrastructural projects extending roads, electricity and water supply into

rural regions. Large numbers of workers left their farms and moved to the cities taking on factory jobs and sending money back to their home villages. Elementary education was made free to all, launching a real demand for higher education and training. These investments paid off handsomely, as China's GDP grew 9.5 percent for 40 years. According to the World Bank, this was the fastest sustained expansion by a major economy in history. And today, only 0.3 percent of China's rural population is living under \$2.15/day.¹⁷ Progress was made in other parts of the world as well, Offenheiser continued. Many countries experimented with creating new forms of social protections or safety nets. Mexico and Brazil raised living standards by giving cash directly to the poor in exchange for regular school attendance by their children and health checkups for all the family. Others saw the positive effects of initiating social pensions and meals in schools. While not likely to have the impact of rapid economic growth, these programs did make a difference and do drive demand in the domestic economy. Americans saw the same kinds of impacts on demand growth and poverty alleviation during Covid-19 when the government extended unemployment benefits and provided \$1 trillion in stimulus payments to 85 percent of US households. The World Bank estimates that social safety net programs were responsible for 36 percent of the global reduction in poverty.¹⁸

The progress made to address extreme poverty, however, is inadequate. The World Bank's current metric of \$2.15 per day does not tell the whole story. Just above this threshold are 70 percent of the global population who live on less than \$10 per day, an amount that may just barely allow a family to meet their basic needs in many countries. There is clearly work to be done to tackle persistent poverty for half the world's population living below \$10/per day. Growing inequality is a new and rising challenge that further complicates efforts at poverty alleviation. Inequalities are often measured by income but are determined by a variety of other factors, including gender, age, ethnicity, disability, class, religion and sexual orientation. Since 1990 incomes have risen, and inequality across all individuals in the world and between countries has declined. However, the more worrying trend is that income inequality *within* countries—the inequality that is most obvious to citizens in their daily lives—has risen dramatically. People measure their progress relative to their family members and the rest of society. Today 71 percent of the world's population lives in countries where inequality has increased—not just the more developed industrialized countries but also many emergent economies as well as India and China.¹⁹

A better way to conceptualize poverty

Tracy Kijewski-Correa set forth an understanding of poverty that offers a crisp alternative to the received scholarly wisdom on the topic. Despite real progress, the flaws in poverty alleviation efforts are many, she noted. Progress was often short-lived, in that individuals could not sustain their improved economic conditions without perpetual reliance on assistance. This is due in part, “to poverty's multifaceted symptoms and root causes.” While they may manifest as a dearth of material needs such as food or clean water, these symptoms

of poverty recur when root causes, such as limited access to education and exclusionary practices that deny participation in societal decision-making, are not addressed.

The consequence of neglecting root causes of poverty, Kijewski-Correa added, became apparent with the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused the biggest reversal of global poverty reduction in decades. In 2020, 71 million more people were living in extreme poverty than the year before.²⁰ The rapid backsliding was perhaps unsurprising, considering that 53 percent of the world's population – 4.1 billion people – do not benefit from any form of social protection. “The Covid-19 reversal was clear evidence that our gains were not only unsustainable, they were highly vulnerable to shocks, begging the question of whether it was time for a different approach.”

A different approach might focus not solely on money and material wealth, but on the broader, deeper, “richer” metrics of human *flourishing* in the first place, as Kijewski-Correa argued:

The false pretense that wealth is the primary determinant of flourishing is not only at odds with Catholic Social Teaching, but has been widely disproven. However, I don't wish to debate the claim that material prosperity is the precondition for flourishing, or even naively assume we could dismantle a world order that prizes material wealth over a possibly more expansive view like flourishing. Instead, I ask that we recognize the implications of our operational definition of poverty—living on less than X-dollars per day—and its sole focus on material deprivation and then ask how we can advance an alternative view, one that promotes human flourishing, while still operating within the realities of a society that was not built to do so.

What prevents us from complementing the study of the physical and material dimensions of poverty with its spiritual, psychological, and social dimensions?

What difference does IHD make?

An IHD approach presses home this question, Kijewski-Correa noted. In 2008, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) released its *Guide to Integral Human Development*, an attempt to operationalize IHD into their programs. CRS defined IHD as a state of society in which people are “able to lead full and productive lives, meeting their basic physical needs and living their lives in an atmosphere of peace, social justice and human dignity,” with emphasis on “an individual's cultural, economic, political, social and spiritual wholeness — a wholeness that we all want to experience and that, in concern for the common good, we want others to experience as well.”²¹ The emphasis on the *common good* ensures that individual well-being is not at odds with the well-being of others and the well-being of the planet. Notably, the World Bank's concept of “well-being” and Catholic Social Teaching's

goal of “flourishing” appear compatible, Kijewski-Correa added. CRS viewed IHD as the vehicle through which its programs could achieve these aims.

But how to implement the values of IHD in practice? Kijewski-Correa acknowledged that every development and humanitarian intervention operates under constraint. Even if a multi-faceted outcome like flourishing could be agreed upon as the goal of a project (and also accepted by its funder), we still have to optimize how we will achieve that outcome under the constraint of limited resources (time and money). That generally encourages finding the most efficient mechanism to achieve our desired outcome. That has one of two implications: (1) focusing on the least vulnerable, as they often require less investment to achieve a targeted state of flourishing or (2) deliver programming in the most cost-effective manner to the most people, which generally favors interventions that address symptoms rather than root causes. In either case we can see how Pareto efficiency works contrary to the preferential option for the poor, who are both the most vulnerable and those likely needing the most attention to root causes.

A shift away from material deprivation toward flourishing, Kijewski-Correa cautioned, will require more than changing *what* we hope to achieve, but also *how* we will achieve it. We cannot claim to fight for the flourishing of all without an uncompromising commitment to the most vulnerable. Nobel Prize winning economists Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo agree that it is time to restore human dignity — a central element of flourishing— to its rightful place through a “profound rethinking of economic priorities and the ways in which societies care for their members, particularly when they are in need.”²² So how do we get there? The Pulte Institute promotes a systems’ view that embraces complexity as a means to identify where and when we should intervene to best promote flourishing. How can we best measure flourishing to ensure our interventions are effective? Thinking in a more integrated or systems view, which entails overcoming the tendency to compartmentalize various types of expertise and knowledge into silos of specialization and embracing the interconnectedness and complexity of our world. The lack of a systems-view leads, at minimum, to interventions that are ineffective in delivering lasting change and that may perpetuate or even amplify poverty and inequality. A systems approach reveals root drivers and consequences as well as how dependencies can create vicious cycles that might undermine programs and even perpetuate poverty.

A systems view is the only way to meaningfully deliver on the promise of human flourishing, as it is fundamentally multi-faceted and touches every aspect of our lives. Understanding a system and its complexity does not mean that you have to attack the entire system inclusive of all the legal systems, market systems, political systems, social norms, and religious beliefs that we operate within a given society, but it does require you to minimally understand and proactively address the potential implications of interventions within a more expansive context. At minimum, a systems approach limits the potential to accelerate vicious cycles; at its best, a

systems view might identify a completely different intervention point that could spur virtuous cycles that promote flourishing in a far more cost-effective way.

While the systems view can show us *where* to intervene, Kijewski-Correa explained, the question of *when* to intervene remains. Interventions can be delivered under three conditions: in response to crisis, in non-crisis settings with the aim of advancing development, and in non-crisis settings with the aim of building resilience. The three are fundamentally different. Acute crises have a particular power in that they reveal vulnerabilities, expose root causes, and create an impetus to act. In my work, Kijewski-Correa explained by way of illustration, a major disaster “serves as a stress test that literally exposes all of the vulnerabilities we failed to address, especially for those who live in conditions of poverty and marginalization.” In the wake of these shocks, newfound awareness is generally accompanied by larger infusions of capital for recovery, that if leveraged properly, can be a chance to “build back better” and in a manner that is more just and equitable. Unfortunately, these moments of opportunity are generally subject to the highest constraints.

The quest to promote flourishing and the importance of intervening through a systems lens may be discarded due to the challenges of coordination during a humanitarian response and the pressure to meet acute needs, she acknowledged. “We may have the best potential to promote flourishing on ‘blue sky days,’ when constraints are lessened and there is greater time and space to envision how IHD can create more sustainable pathways to flourishing.” While “blue sky” days don’t have the urgency to act or the capital that a crisis brings, she added, explicitly connecting humanitarian responses with long-term development investments can at least leverage the powerful motivations of a recent shock to drive change within a longer-horizon development effort, a strategy commonly used by CRS. “We just have to avoid the trap of assuming we only need to achieve flourishing today, under the normal operating conditions of daily life. In a world increasingly gripped by climatological shocks and conflicts, our work on ‘blue sky days’ must imagine a tomorrow when skies are gray.” Only then can we ensure our interventions will deliver flourishing that can be preserved or at least quickly restored after the shocks that will inevitably come.

Building adaptive capacity or resilience requires a level of proactivity, investment and integration that is less common in our conventional approach to development but something organizations like CRS are working to mainstream. She writes:

Notably, interventions that build resilience have important corollaries to flourishing. Building individual, community, and societal resilience requires much more than physical assets and productive capacities; social cohesion and cooperation are essential to rebounding when skies are gray and they equally promote flourishing when skies are blue. Achieving this aim is inherently more complex and often requires contending with unjust policies, systems and practices pervasive in our

society, but I argue, is increasingly vital for the most vulnerable who have the least capacity to absorb shocks and even lesser capacity to rebound into a state of flourishing.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in designing interventions, she continued, lies in the fact that our knowledge is incomplete and our assumptions uncertain (especially when it comes to a concept like flourishing)—a gap that is only closed by data. Achieving the paradigm shift away from poverty as solely material deprivation and toward a more encompassing goal of flourishing will therefore demand new tools to measure, predict and evaluate these more amorphous concepts. In a world built on measuring productivity, revenues, debts and monetary worth, we have ample instruments and data to measure our material world. We can measure assets like physical possessions and shared infrastructure, financial capacity, and even natural resources.

We have greater challenges measuring the immaterial dimensions of well-being for an individual or even a collective, for these include spiritual and human assets, our social assets, and our political capital. Valuing these assets also means we cannot simply monetize them and feed them into our existing frameworks conceived to value money and material goods. After all, these have no way to realistically value the good that comes from relationships, meaning and purpose. How would our neoclassical economic models even monetize the value of cultural and spiritual goods? While there are clever efforts to create indices to do just that, we may need to completely rethink our conceptual frameworks, models and mechanisms to generate data in order to capture the different dimensions of flourishing truly. Doing so will not only enable us to design and continually refine our interventions, but will provide the rigorous evidence necessary to prove that IHD does deliver superior outcomes for society.

The most daunting challenge to rethinking what poverty is and how we measure it may be one of scale. Concepts underpinning well-being are highly contextualized. What constitutes whole-person flourishing undoubtedly varies across cultures and contexts, and thus while a minimum income defining the poverty line could be universalized, with convenient adjustments for cost of living by country, a minimum well-being threshold hardly can. Accepting that well-being is highly contextualized and even personalized will challenge us to conceive of new means to measure, model and predict what are highly subjective and personalized beliefs and experiences. Yet it will be vital to do so since studies show that concepts like a sense of purpose and a sense of community are superior barometers for well-being, more than income levels could ever be.²³

Acknowledging that reforming the dominant economic model, whose emphasis is on limitless economic growth, and operationalizing value-driven concepts like “flourishing” will be an uphill battle, Kijewski-Correa argued that we should build on current effective methods that have already begun to lend nuance and humanize the dominant

macroeconomic approach. The proliferation of Randomized Control Trials (RCTs), for example, has downscaled our understanding of the lived experience of poverty and its root causes. We can now start to integrate those learnings into the more complex systems view that flourishing demands, collecting more data as gaps become apparent and creating the space to animate those systems to discover interventions that can be sustained in even the darkest of days. “We inevitably will encounter failures as we move into these uncharted waters,” Kijewski-Correa cautioned. “The question becomes how will we learn from those failures and not let them dissuade us from staying the course.”²⁴

Alleviating Poverty Through Social Mobility

Returning to the problem of inequality, **Patrizio Piraino** illustrated ways in which conventional economic methods and metrics might be developed in the direction of enhancing human flourishing. He addressed the challenges of poverty, inequality, and marginalization through the prism of social mobility. Scholars working in the social sciences have defined social mobility as the ability of individuals or families to move up or down the social ladder over their lifetimes or across generations, typically by gaining access to high-quality education, well-paying jobs, affordable housing, clean water and nutritious food, and professional healthcare. Understanding social mobility requires analyzing the broader societal structures and mechanisms of inclusion/ exclusion that affect the individual’s quality of life. All over the world, Piraino noted, people are prevented from participating fully in society and from accessing market opportunities due to a variety of barriers.²⁵

A large empirical literature from both economists and sociologists shows consistent evidence of positive correlations between the socioeconomic status of parents and that of their adult offspring, Piraino continued. This is true for every society for which we have data and across several measures of status (e.g., labor market earnings, total market income, welfare receipts, educational attainments, etc.). Researchers and policymakers have identified a number of “stylized facts” regarding the factors that can help explain the observed variation in social (im)mobility levels across and within countries. Yet most of the stylized facts on possible drivers of mobility are derived from empirical analyses of high-income countries; analyzing the data at hand, Piraino concludes that “even the existing theoretical contributions in the literature appear to be implicitly benchmarked on structural processes that may be more applicable to high-GDP economies.” This gap in the literature, he said, provides “an opportunity for the development and application of new approaches to research.” A related question: “Can the findings from these high-GDP regions be extended to the much larger pool of the world population living in low and middle-income societies?”

A starting point, he explained, is the intergenerational mobility model, which has shed light on some of the most common determinants of social mobility. In addition to the widely accepted drivers established by the standard model of the wealthier countries (e.g., inherited family attributes, parental investments in children’s human capital) other factors may be of

particular importance for developing economies. Barriers to social inclusion and upward mobility in developing countries, which have received less attention, are a focus of Piraino's research.

In the domain of labor markets, for standard models of mobility implicitly assume a unitary labor market where skills are equally rewarded across sectors. But this assumption is less realistic in the context of developing countries, where labor markets are often segmented and workers with similar human capital and skills can earn significantly different wages depending on the sector of their employment. Piraino continued:

Moreover, it is plausible to expect that the capacity to access different segments of the market is itself correlated across generations, which creates an additional channel of status transmission from parent to child. This applies to segmentation across sectors (agriculture vs industry), locations (urban vs rural), and occupations (formal vs informal). The key distinction here is in the underlying driver of intergenerational persistence. That is, do children of low-income (or high-income) parents end up in low-paying (or high-paying) jobs as a result of lower (higher) productive endowments and human capital, as in the standard models, or are they destined to remain in the same segment of the labor market as their parents because of barriers to mobility across sectors?

We know that labor markets in developing economies face significant “frictions,” or barriers to employment, including imperfect information on available job vacancies and the skills required of workers, as well as geographical constraints to labor mobility. These misalignments may affect the selection of employees and the wages of employed workers, contributing to decreasing mobility in low- and middle-income countries.²⁶ Hiring firms can reduce information asymmetries for young jobseekers through referrals from previous employers. Former employers, Piraino noted, have valuable information about workers' skills that would otherwise be unobservable in the hiring process.

Evidence from experimental studies on the role of information frictions in other contexts shows that programs that help jobseekers signal or certify their skills can have positive effects on employment outcomes. These types of interventions are shown to be particularly useful for those with the least education and experience, suggesting that information frictions disproportionately affect people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.²⁷

To take another example, several studies suggest that credit constraints play a larger role in developing countries as compared to high-income economies.²⁸ In addition, due to significant earnings volatility and imperfect insurance against shocks, many households from developing countries are more risk-averse, therefore underinvesting in the education of their children. If credit and insurance markets are more likely to fail in these contexts, the chances of upward mobility for children at the bottom of the income distribution may

be lower than in rich countries. Societies with well-functioning credit markets should have fewer constrained families and, consequently, display higher levels of overall intergenerational income mobility. Maoz and Moav argue that less efficient credit markets may partially explain why intergenerational earnings mobility is higher in high-GDP economies.²⁹ This intuition has direct policy relevance. If credit constraints are an important determinant of intergenerational mobility, easing credit market access for targeted groups would have desirable effects in terms of both equity and efficiency. Piraino's research looks at ways to break such "liquidity traps" in the context of humanitarian crises.

In short, the unique circumstances in the Global South provide promising avenues for novel research on social mobility. In some cases, the state of the art in the North can lay the foundation for research; for example, the recent studies of the "geography of mobility" in high-income countries can be replicated in parts of the developing world, where data allows. This replicate-and-extend method, Piraino argued, could be coupled with a more narrowly focused investigation of various barriers to sectoral, geographical, and occupational mobility to understand the unique impacts of labor market segmentation on mobility in specific contexts.

Such a multiple-methods approach can help policymakers design effective interventions that can level the global economic playing field, Piraino argued. "Thanks to the distinct set of skills and expertise in the Keough School, we are well positioned to stimulate contributions that can help advance this important literature," he concluded. "Our distinct focus on HD in understudied contexts, often using novel data and testing unproved theories, is bound to produce insights that are applicable to the most vulnerable populations, ultimately offering a more complete picture of how social mobility can more effectively chart a path out of poverty."

Patrizio Piraino's affirmation of IHD as a framework for analyzing social mobility led the discussant back to the Rome conference's central question: what difference, if any, does it make to place human dignity at the center of one's research and teaching?

Paul Perrin addressed this question enthusiastically but also warily, from a perspective that might be summarized by the precept, "Whatever you do, do no harm." He warned the assembly of the "benevolent indignities" trap.

Human dignity, he asserted, is "the inherent value that every individual possesses equally by virtue of being a human being, independent of one's abilities, characteristics, or actions."³⁰ Despite the central importance that major global institutions have placed on the concept, violations of or assaults on human dignity referred to as "indignities" remain pervasive. The ultimate indignity is genocide and other forms of murder; other global indignities include incidences of violence, assault, subjugation, injustice, humiliation, and disenfranchisement. Human rights advocates are concerned with addressing such "malevolent" indignities—or

violations of human dignity perpetuated purposefully with ill intent towards a person or groups of people.

While the 16th Sustainable Development Goal calls for building “effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels,”³¹ even institutions that might be considered strong or free from corruption can fail to affirm or even violate the human dignity of those under their care. “Indeed,” Perrin observed, “even though dignity is a pervasive idea in global institutions, few if any have been able to operationalize this concept effectively in their policies and programs.”

Although many scholars have studied the concept of dignity across disciplines, research on the operationalization of dignity-affirming approaches to global affairs practice is in its infancy. In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis, acknowledging this gap, suggested that indignities can be imposed even by well-meaning actors with respect for the dignity of each person.³² Such “benevolent indignities” are violations of human dignity perpetuated unintentionally and despite the best of motives.

Why do benevolent indignities occur? The Western paradigm for development, Perrin explained, has placed a central emphasis on the material, observable world, often at the expense of the immaterial aspects of human existence. This materialist approach, which informs classical economics, allows specialists to tackle problems within a clear sphere of expertise such as the physician, the psychiatrist, the social worker, and the cleric. Utilitarianism has provided a broad framework for measuring the success of social change efforts; for example, it has shaped Perrin’s field of monitoring and evaluation of development projects by judging the merits of interventions predominantly in terms of maximizing impact at the aggregate population level. Finally, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs informs the priorities of development and humanitarian enterprises, which rush to meet basic, biophysical needs by expanding access to incomes and other material goods and services. “This all makes a certain sense, of course,” Perrin writes, “while also serving to eclipse a fuller picture of the human person as a spiritual and psychological as well as a material being.”

These exclusively materialist ways of thinking, however, are often at odds with the framework for social change suggested by IHD. The pernicious implication of one popular reading of Descartes, Smith, and Maslow, Perrin argued, is that people in various forms of deprivation or vulnerability are somehow less human than those who are better able to meet their fundamental human needs. Moreover, utilitarian views which conceptualize success in the aggregate can mask and exacerbate inequality, as they tend to disincentivize efforts that focus on the most marginalized.

Over 20 years designing, implementing, managing, and evaluating hundreds of global development programs in a wide variety of settings and technical sectors, Perrin has become

aware of certain indignities that tend to recur, even when organizations successfully achieve significant objective impact:

The status quo approach to improving well-being worldwide can actually contribute to power imbalances, dehumanization and instrumentalization of people in poverty, leaving marginalized populations feeling inferior that they have been treated unfairly or even condescendingly by well-intentioned people or organizations meant to serve them.³³

To illustrate, Perrin listed ten commonly occurring benevolent indignities that arise in the practice of Global Affairs. These include *reductionism* or the reduction of the complex richness of individuals or groups of people to a singular characteristic or label—labels that are sometimes prejudicial and dehumanizing, intentionally or not.

When people are monolithically labeled as “refugees,” “the poor,” “homeless,” “vulnerable,” or with any given disease label they often feel as though that is the only aspect of their lives that is observed, considered, and approached. A growing body of research is demonstrating that the way we have historically conceptualized and spoken about vulnerable populations is contributing to and perpetuating the problem of vulnerability itself. For example, the discourse around poverty can be heavily politicized and stigmatizing, with different beliefs about poverty’s root causes and solutions.³⁴

While some narratives are more stigmatizing than others, all these beliefs and discourses set “the poor” as distinct and different from “mainstream society.”³⁵ Research in many countries consistently finds that the poverty discourse leads to a sense of shame and stigma, which in turn contributes to chronic issues such as social exclusion, social withdrawal, self-loathing, “othering,” despair, depression, thoughts of suicide, limited social capital, low feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy, low motivation, and feeling a lack of agency and autonomy that could all contribute to perpetuating poverty.³⁶

Infantilization, another unintentional indignity, is fostered by the perception that a person or a group of people is not capable of meeting their own needs and therefore require intervention by a supposedly more endowed and enlightened outside actor. Clemens Sedmak describes this as stemming from a mindset that people are not capable of making decisions or exercising agency on their own behalf.³⁷ Infantilization (how a person or organization sees others as *inferior* in resources, understanding, and ability) goes hand-in-hand with “*Saviorism*” (how a person or organization sees oneself as *superior* in resources, understanding, and ability).³⁸ Closely related, *Instrumentalization* occurs when a person or group of people are seen as a means of achieving a goal of an outside party (for example, a social service organization). This becomes a benevolent indignity when the instrumentalized individual has no means of providing consent for the process, is

dehumanized through the act of extracting benefit, and does not share in the positive result for the instrumentalizing party.³⁹ It is not uncommon in Global Affairs to see the logos of various benevolent actors emblazoned on provided goods and activities as a way of making work visible and promoting success. Pictures of purportedly happy “beneficiaries” are plastered across organizational annual reports. Critics of these practices claim that this “carnival of names and flags and logos”⁴⁰ is demeaning to people who participate in development programs, that it reinforces the colonial nature of global development, that it inhibits sustainable solutions, or that it undermines the critical work of national and local governments and humanitarian groups.⁴¹

Other types of benevolent indignities, according to Perrin, include *Distancing*, which occurs when organizations based upon Western models of professional ethics, reluctant to risk “unobjective” familiarity with those they serve, err on the side of social distance; *Disregard*, which refers to an organization’s passive disregard of the feedback and input from participants, who might otherwise contribute to design and implementation of programs intended to support them, assume ownership of social processes, and participate in evaluating the success of such programs and organizations; *Opacity*, the hoarding of data and information, a violation of global transparency principles which declare that information on aid should be published proactively, but should be comprehensive, timely, accessible and comparable⁴²; *Favoritism*, a violation of impartiality, that opens the way for discrimination against on the grounds of status, including age, gender, race, color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, language, religion, disability, health status, political or other opinion, and national or social origin;⁴³ and, *Constructionism*, which encourages emphasis on the built environment: annual reports are filled with evidence of their commitment to physical infrastructure such as the investments in building schools, medical facilities, power supply systems, communication systems, roads and other transportation infrastructure, water systems, and buildings that serve as locations for providing other public services.⁴⁴

Addressing Obstacles to IHD: Keough School Initiatives

The Keough School, Perrin reported, is leading the charge in supporting organizations in becoming more aware of benevolent indignities and providing tools to address and eradicate their occurrence; the field of global affairs is primed to accept this kind of translational research.⁴⁵ The School’s Pulte Institute for Global Development has established a research and policy track record in this space through partnerships with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Harvard University, and ID insight, among others. After performing an in-depth literature review of the empirical evidence around human dignity that encompasses various technical and faith traditions, along with measurement frameworks, a team of Pulte Institute researchers extracted more than 40 concepts related to the affirmation or violation of human dignity, and is now creating a “dignity database” by mapping measurement tools for each

of these associated concepts.⁴⁶ The Pulte team is also working to expand the database to encompass non-English language literature.

This body of scholarship has demonstrated that while the concept of human dignity seems to be universal, the manifestations of what constitutes an affirmation of human dignity tend to vary by context, although some concepts seem to be more universal than others. This tool can serve researchers and practitioners alike in better understanding human dignity in context. The Pulte team, for example, is partnering with CRS to design and validate a pair of survey tools for assessing the extent to which development services are provided in a dignity-affirming way.⁴⁷ The tools are designed to be incorporated into larger assessments of program and organizational impact. In partnership with CRS, Pulte has tested and validated this tool in India, the Philippines, Zambia, and Niger. The tool showed strong psychometric properties both within each country and across the four countries, prompting CRS to seek to incorporate this tool into routine evaluations in other programs and settings.⁴⁸ Respect for dignity has inherent value but can also contribute to the achievement of other desired outcomes.⁴⁹ For example, a recent Dignity Symposium brought together nearly one hundred scholars and practitioners with an interest in the science of human dignity, who articulated a global learning agenda to deepen the evidence base. The learning agenda lays out a set of questions around the nexus between the measurement and application of affirmation of human dignity and its relationship with desired social and individual outcomes. The symposium called for a home for the study of dignity, “where new collaborations might be struck up and progress in its study be tracked.”⁵⁰

The University of Notre Dame is well-positioned to fill this gap by providing an institutional home for an alternative approach to poverty and well-being using the lens of IHD and human dignity. The Keough School has advanced a concept—called the Dignity Lab—to build upon these successes and assert a leading role in advancing a dignity-lens approach to global affairs. It adopts the lens put forward by Paul Farmer when he said that “the idea that some lives matter less is the root of all that is wrong with the world.”⁵¹ Indeed, Perrin concluded, perhaps global challenges such as poverty and income inequality are symptoms of something more profound: inequity in how each person’s human dignity is differentially perceived, valued, and affirmed by individuals and especially by institutions.

In the vein of “turning evidence into action,” **Ray Offenheiser** described the paradox in how we think and act with regard to achieving sustainable economic growth in the 21st century. On the one hand, he noted, mainstream economics holds that economic growth would have to increase fourfold by 2050 to meet the challenge of global poverty. On the other hand, “we are realizing that the resources necessary to sustain growth and ensure a sustainable future are more and more scarce and we must reduce consumption and strive for a more circular economy.”

Traditional economics has little time for the incorporation of normative principles that might interfere with the logic of utility and price. Yet this logic puts contemporary capitalism on a collision course with planetary biophysical limits. To redress this contradiction, schools of public policy with a normative foundation and inter-disciplinary approach and culture are uniquely positioned to challenge the dominant paradigm and join with those scholars and institutes that are seeking a path toward a sustainable capitalism.

One of the most overlooked areas in development studies, Offenheiser maintained, is the role of institutions and their effectiveness in delivering quality outcomes. Programs of social protection, healthcare, and education, which can be delivered on scale only by effective states, constitute the foundational infrastructure, as it were, that is required for sustainable development goals to be realized. There is a specific role for universities in this cause, namely to shed light on issues of institutional performance, capacity and accountability.⁵² At the heart of building effective states are leaders who model the required levels of sophistication, excellence and integrity. Training that leadership is one contribution of universities, but more could be done through research in institutional economics and organizational sociology and in building tools to monitor performance and institutionalize accountability practices.

Sustainability is still a nascent field; in many universities, it is a highly technical science-based field. “Yet in practice sustainability particularly as it pertains to issues of poverty must of necessity be an interdisciplinary field,” Offenheiser said:

The Keough School has built a strong interdisciplinary faculty that span the sciences, social sciences and human rights domains. This unique composition allows us to conceive of research initiatives that cross disciplinary boundaries and allow for studies of human rights and water or food security and poverty, global business and conflict, climate change and mass migration et al. There is a wide array of complex problems with clear policy and practice implications that might be explored creatively under the broad frame of sustainability. The challenge for us is whether our mission and operational incentives will allow us to grow into this new, more permeable notion of how disciplines may collaborate across traditional boundaries. This is clearly both a challenge an opportunity.

Our deep commitment to IHD, Offenheiser added, opens a variety of unique ways we might contribute to poverty related work. The work on dignity described in Paul Perrin’s paper, for example, represents a real challenge to development practitioners and policy makers to seek greater self-awareness of their implicit biases and behaviors that may prejudice their efforts.

Taken to another level, IHD would suggest we explore more deeply how dignity translates into agency and into capabilities and into full ownership of the development process at the community, regional and national level. One might imagine, for example, that the national official dealing with the foreign aid bureaucrat feels the same sense of indignity as the small subsistence farmer confronted with an impatient ex-patriate development worker. If we are going to decolonize the aid process, we are going to have to name and confront such behaviors and change the social dynamics that are entrenched in the cultures of northern-based development institutions. Lurking beneath the social relations between donor and recipient are complex and often invisible or hidden power dynamics that are seldom discussed when analyzing development failures. Adding analysis of power, who has it and who does not, to our IHD framework will allow us to begin to see deeper systemic and structural barriers to poverty alleviation that will need to be addressed through strategic policy and practice reforms.

Perhaps the biggest challenge to this Keough School vision and aspiration, Offenheiser concluded, is the minimal impact that research evaluating the human impact of development initiatives and recommending improvements has on higher-level policy discussions on aid effectiveness. “It is a little-known fact outside Washington, D.C. that the US government foreign aid architecture still operates under the Kennedy-era Foreign Assistance Act of the 1961, drafted in the depths of the Cold War,” he explained. Efforts have been made to introduce a 21st century version that reflects 75 years of learning and the contemporary context, but there is still much to be done to bring the US government as the world’s largest foreign aid donor into the 21st century. “This is a meaty policy agenda that has multiple dimensions extending from the implementation of the localization agenda to the role of public-private partnerships to the future of the World Bank and Bretton Woods financing institutions to rights-based as opposed to needs-based approaches to development.”

Finally, the essential role of markets and the private sector in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals has been recognized by the UN, which has created the Global Compact to engage and challenge corporate leaders to step up and recognize their responsibilities and roles. Increased flows of private capital as foreign direct investment into emergent economies and low-income countries are already setting the opportunity horizon for the poor in the 21st century. Visionary CEOs under pressure from diverse stakeholders are recognizing that climate change is a direct threat to the very viability of their industries and are taking steps to not only lower their carbon footprint but to explore ways they might improve their social and ecological impacts all along their value chains. They are actively building sustainability units charged with implementing annual sustainability plans dealing with initiatives on water security, labor relations, environmental impacts, human rights, and transitioning to a renewable energy future. Universities with strong sustainability units have a real opportunity to provide critical professional guidance to these companies in defining their roles and goals, assessing opportunities and risks, targeting areas appropriate for

strategic investments that may produce win-win outcomes for society and companies, and preparing students to assume roles in these new sustainability units.

These are but a few areas where university-based research and scholarship can find unique niches from which they can support a wide array of programs directed at poverty and inequality, Offenheiser concluded. There is no shortage of interested potential partners.

Sr. Helen Alford began her response to the papers and presentations by Professors Kijewski-Correa, Iyer and Piraino by picking up on Tracy Kijewski-Correa’s point about the challenges of operationalizing an IHD-informed or “human flourishing” definition of poverty—in contrast to the World Bank’s definition. She agreed with Kijewski-Correa that emphasizing humility and courage are the virtues that must inform the daunting task of putting into practice—operationalizing—ideals like IHD and “human flourishing.”

Sr. Helen made three additional points: First, dealing with the vast material dimensions of the global situation is difficult but important (even within a human flourishing perspective): annually, in a \$100 trillion world economy, \$27 trillion is saved, \$27 million is invested—and the world needs to invest \$4-5 trillion each year to achieve the SDGs by 2030. How to incentivize such investment? One challenge: The time lag between investments in economic development and the full return on investments—in education, most crucially, when “returns” may not be evident for 30-40 years—is a strong disincentive. We could conceivably deal with such challenges, but how to come up with a system that addresses the material dimensions in a more holistic and humane manner? It is not impossible.

Second, in the operationalization efforts, measurement is crucial but also tricky. If one seeks to advance “transformational” projects, for example, people need to see how such transformations could be possible. In this regard, developing appropriate measurements are crucial. Beyond material metrics, spiritual dimensions are of course harder to gauge. Composite measures are important in this regard, in that they can challenge other big measures. Can GDP be displaced or at least contextualized? Amartya Sen came to believe that human development composite measures could dethrone GDP. Composite measures have a role, Sr. Alford affirmed, though they can misguide us if they lose the specificity that comes with the data and other information that comes with a conventional, materialist approach to metrics. Equally important then, are multidimensional measures (e.g. “gross national happiness”), which do have a spiritual dimension (e.g., “time for prayer and meditation”). So, third, for a Catholic context, some way of measuring “spiritual capital” would be important, as well as the policies and structures that would support the decision to bear children, for example, or other means of deepening community and relationality.

Turning to Iyer’s paper, Sr. Alford wondered whether the focus on gender quota research is a bit like the focus on dollar-level cutoffs mentioned by Kijewski-Correa—does it push us in the right direction, in that we get conflicting results—are we getting to the roots? Likewise,

does focusing on paid work and careers really get at the heart of the matter? Well, yes, it is true, the decision-makers are usually the ones in these paid positions. But the CST idea of putting the human person at the center of these systems may change our perspective. For example, what would it mean to acknowledge the disabled as contributing in their way to a flourishing economy, measured in a holistic way? Why not focus on valuable work that helps normal people? Work, for example, that provides care, including childcare, for women and families who have their own jobs. Finally, Sr. Alford observed that some ideas derived from Christianity have stirred opposition and criticism, including from within the Church, that has led to constructive debates and dialogues about gender inequality.

Piriano, she continued, is correct to emphasize the need to look at different institutional cultures. Italy, for example, was once derided as “backward” for its persistent focus on small farms, but that Italian sociocultural preference has contributed an important element to the trends in food security solutions. It is great news, Sr. Alford underscored, that some parts of the world did not go all out for the mass production system. That said, she continued, in addition to institutional variability, we also do need some basic shared human systems, which are good for us *as humans*. This is what we used to call a matter of “natural law,” which asked: what do we need for human beings qua human beings? What do we need to leave free for cultural diversity? Happiness research helps us here, Sr. Alford suggested. At low levels of income, increasing people’s incomes increases happiness. But at a certain point—not a very high level of income, in fact—the correlation to happiness is with other factors, such as the quality of peoples’ relationships. The game analogy might be relevant here as well, she said by way of conclusion. Once everyone is included within the basic parameters and rules of the game, there is great flexibility for how one actually plays the games, takes various decisions, etc.

Iyer engaged Sr. Alford’s remarks by picking up on Sr.’s distinction between paid work and the quality of the work. Placing emphasis on paid work alone is certainly flawed, Lakshmi agreed, whether it is a flaw in the research, or in society’s tendency to judge that “Care work is not compensated monetarily so it must not be valuable.” But is the paid work meaningful? Lakshmi agrees that we do need a new measure for the value people bring to a society. Sr. Alford asked a very important question, as well, about gender quotas, which are ubiquitous worldwide. While more than 100 countries have gender quotas, it is not clear that they were designed very well or adjusted to specific contexts and local norms. Indeed, a quota is often a simplistic formula: “We have gender inequality? Let’s impose a quota.” This approach, Iyer continues, can also lead to complacency: well, we’ve taken care of the problem by establishing a quota.”

Iyer concluded by emphasizing the point that metrics can be tricky: we want to measure not only what workers produce for society but also how society serves their flourishing as well.

Piraino appreciated Sr. Alford’s notion of the shared rules of a game. He added that, at a Catholic university, we are comfortable speaking of normative values, so once the norms are clear and agreed upon, we can focus on how to realize and implement them. If there is a rationale for why the policy is in place, then we live with the outcomes and consequences, including the fact that there are “winners” and “losers” in any policy debate and decision. If I have agreed to the rules (norms), I agree to live with the outcomes.

In response to a question posed by Keough School Advisory Council member **Rafat Ansari** about the ways natural disasters, wars and other external factors exacerbate the poverty that billions of people are already experiencing, Kijewski-Correadescribed these as “shocks” to the system, and noted that her research and policy work calls for building more durable systems that can minimize the impact of these shocks and, equally important, Kijewski-Correa’s work emphasizes the crucial importance of shifting the focus of government, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations from a reactive mindset—let’s clean up the disaster we just experienced—to an anticipatory, proactive attitude, as in “let’s prepare for the disasters we know are coming and put better structures and processes in place, in order to minimize their impact on the poor and others.”

Neela Saldanha and Duncan Green responded to the papers and presentations by Offenheiser and Perrin.

Neela Saldanha asked: What would a more ambitious development agenda look like? Operationalizing a definition of human flourishing would be a place to begin. Dignity, of course, is not a new notion, she noted, nor an exclusively religious one, from 1948 to the Gates Foundation today, whose motto is “Every life is of equal value.” Dignity, she added, is inherent, not earned or bestowed by someone else. That said, poor people do not have the power to reject development assistance help even if it comes with one or more of the benevolent indignities described by Perrin.

We are policing ourselves in the development world, Saldanha acknowledged, but what are the institutional checks and balances on us? What incentivizes us to avoid benevolent indignities?

She cited three marks of dignity being recognized. The first is “representativeness”: Do people feel seen and heard (or not, as they choose)? Do we reduce people to a single story or see them in their distinctiveness? The second is “agency”: Do people have control over their experiences? The infantilization sometimes practiced by (often well-meaning) development actors, for example, does not respect one’s agency. Finally, “equality”: Not that everyone has the same but people feel treated fairly. But programs that do not meet these standards, and commit benevolent indignities cannot necessarily be rejected by the poor; the power relations cannot be overlooked.

We need a grammar to speak about dignity and human flourishing, Saldanha continued. The move “from evidence to action” here is important, and development of a prose, a language about dignity, is a necessary condition for this—and this is what universities should be doing. As Offenheiser mentioned, we must rethink our relationships and partnerships with the Global South. Research shows that developing programs at scale requires governments and states. Here research and RCTs are important but more important to the recipients of development assistance are the answers to these questions: Was the research conducted in my country or one similar to mine? Does a local expert recommend this research? In short, the research, programs and practices must be tailored to the local context. Partnerships between the Global North and South must take power relationships into account. This tailoring of Western practices to local global south contexts will be hard, especially at a time when corporations are watering down their commitments to DEI and to sustainability. Updating the neo-liberal agenda will be bumpy along the way, but it is necessary.

Values-based leadership is essential, Saldanha concluded. She reported that her book on *Marketplace Dignity* has received a positive response; “people want to do this, to adopt a dignity lens; they just don’t have the tools, vocabulary and the measurements to think about it, so the Keough School is doing a great job in providing this.”

Duncan Green opened his comments with an appreciation of the panel’s focus on positive assets, on value beyond numbers and income, and on Offenheiser’s focus on inequality and on institutions. The notion of multi-dimensional poverty (Sen) assumed correctly that poverty is linked to indignity and inequality to the erosion of social cohesion.

He then turned to weaknesses and oversights in the papers and presentations beginning with the “China Problem,” namely, the dilemma raised by the fact of a non-democratic authoritarian state achieving astounding success in lifting millions of people out of poverty. The conventional wisdom behind books like *Why Nations Fail?* Green noted, is that prosperous, developed nations must be like the US or Denmark (the West). By this reckoning, the three signs of successful development states are: an active and engaged citizenry, a responsive and effective state, and open and inclusive markets—but China, which scores low on each, is by many measurements the model of successful development. So, is the answer: “Be more like China.”? The papers and presentations, Green pointed out, do not really grapple with this challenge.

A second puzzle: Who are the “we”? The papers imagine a global community, but does such a global community really exist or is it no more than a shrinking Western aid bubble? In terms of the flow of resources devoted to getting people out of poverty, the money from domestic sources is only growing, Green noted. Just one source of money—Zakat, a 2.5 percent wealth tax on Muslims—amounts to \$1 trillion per year, five or six times the amount of total global aid; and remittances account for three times the amount of global aid. “We”—the international development community—are increasingly irrelevant, it seems, Green remarked. In political

terms, more and more countries are graduating out of aid dependence. The rise of regional powers is also making western development less central to eradicating poverty.

And Perrin's notion of benevolent indignities is spot-on, he added, with top-down Western development agencies, inadvertently or not, fostering these consequences.

Green then turned to the animating question of the panel: how do we translate research into policy, and what is the role of the academy in this process? Green acknowledged that formulating and refining a grammar and vocabulary of poverty and dignity is important, but so, too is one's "theory of change." Is there more than just critiquing and analyzing the situation? What shifts the paradigm? We need a really big idea, Green said, and the skill to communicate it. How to seize the attention of the academy? For better or worse, Hayek and Friedman, et al, at Chicago did so, as did Sen. They made very deliberate moves to shape the field. Identify positive deviance, like the idea of dignity, and see how it can be scaled. So, Green's advice, in short: Step outside the Western bubble, which is shrinking, and ask ourselves "awkward questions" about who we are and what we should be doing.

In the discussion that followed, **Kyle Jaros** asked about the trade-off between "dignity" and other goals, including the practical need in crises that demand massive, large-scale immediate relief, such as disasters and public health emergencies, to treat people a bit like objects or numbers, as it were. Can new technologies of aid address this dilemma? Perrin responded that it is not an either/or formula but a both/and, or should not become one. Other metrics are also important. Researchers at the Pulte Institute are addressing this question by asking people around the world who have been recipients of aid: what works? How have your interactions with development workers been? Are they respectful, collaborative, etc.? With partners at IDinsight, based in the UK with offices across the Global South, we have identified several "quick wins," adjustments that can make a modest but important difference in the short term.

Rafat Ansari observed that successful corporations practice respect for human dignity as a way of advancing their reputation among both their employees and clients. Offenheiser asked Perrin to reflect on the implications of the connection between dignity and human rights, a connection which Perrin affirmed, even as he urged the development, within the interdisciplinary Keough School, of new questions that would lead to actions that advance rights.

Jenna Ahn of Catholic Relief Services, who is a member of the Keough School Advisory Council noted that CRS receives money from donors who bring their own metrics, which are and are not compatible with IHD. These donors are not all Catholic, she said, but they might be open to a persuasive argument about the "development benefits" to be garnered from an IHD-inspired approach and metrics. In short, she concluded, the Keough School is positioned to bring such an argument to bear on the field.

ENDNOTES

¹ “Global Progress in Reducing Extreme Poverty Grinds to a Halt,” *World Bank Group*, October 5, 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/10/05/global-progress-in-reducing-extreme-poverty-grinds-to-a-halt>.

² United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], *Annual Report 2020* <https://www.unfpa.org/annual-report-2020>

³ The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance documented that, in 2022, 27 countries specified a percentage of seats in the legislature that must be filled by women, 61 countries required a certain percentage of electoral candidates to be women, and political parties in 23 countries had voluntarily chosen to have gender quotas. On average, such gender quotas result in women comprising 24.7 percent of the national parliament, compared to 18.4 percent in countries without a quota. See Melanie M. Hughes, Pamela Paxton, Amanda B. Clayton and Pär Zetterberg, “Global Gender Quota Adoption, Implementation and Reform,” *Comparative Politics* 51 no. 2 (2019) 219-238.

⁴ See the review in Irma Clots-Figueras and Lakshmi Iyer, “Gender and Natural Experiments in Developing Countries,” in *Handbook of Experimental Development Economics*, edited by Utteeyo Dasgupta and Pushkar Maitra (Edgar Elgar, 2025).2025.

⁵ See details in Ibid.

⁶ Christina Wolbrecht and David Campbell, “Leading by Example: Female Members of Parliament as Political Role Models,” *American Journal of Political Science* (2007) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00289.x> Also see Sonia Bhalotra, et al., “Intimate Partner Violence and the Business Cycle,” SSRN Electronic Journal 2018.

⁷ Lakshmi Iyer and Margaret Triyana, “Gender Quotas and Crimes Against Women: Is there an Intensive Margin Effect?” (2022) https://www.isid.ac.in/~epu/acegd2022/papers/Lakshmi_Iyer.pdf

⁸ For instance, women who win mayoral or parliamentary elections in Sweden are twice as likely to get divorced than men who win such elections; a similar widening of divorce rates happens for women who become CEOs; see Ollie Folke and Johanna Rickne, “All the Single Ladies: Job Promotions and the Durability of Marriage,” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* (Vol. 12, no. 1, January 2020): 260-87.

⁹ In 2000, 31, 43 and 105 countries did not prohibit employment discrimination, inheritance inequality and credit discrimination, respectively. Thus, some progress is being made on the legal dimension, but the pace is slow.

¹⁰ Mohammed Amin and Asif Islam, “Are Large Informal Firms More Productive than the Small, Informal Firms? Evidence from Firm-Level Surveys in Africa,” *World Development*, Vol. 74, October 2015: 374-385.

¹¹ Alexander Fertig, Alexandra Hartman, Lakshmi Iyer, and Edmund Malesky, “A Field of Her Own: Property Rights and Women’s Agency in Myanmar,” *Journal of Politics* (2025). <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/epdf/10.1086/734236>

¹² Julia Kowalski, *Counseling Women: Kinship Against Violence in India* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022).

¹³ Iyer et al., 2012

¹⁴ Abby Córdova and Helen Kras, “The Politics of Private Violence: How Intimate Partner Victimization Influences Political Attitudes,” *Latin American Politics and Society* (2022) <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/latin-american-politics-and-society/article/abs/politics-of-private-violence-how-intimate-partner-violence-victimization-influences-political-attitudes/EFC84D1672C2BF8F9275538956150DAD>

¹⁵ World Bank, *Poverty and Inequality Update*, Spring 2024. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents>

¹⁶ Homi Kharas and Meagan Dooley, “The evolution of global poverty, 1990-2030,” Brookings Institute 2022.

¹⁷ Lucy Tompkins, “Extreme poverty has been sharply cut. What has changed?” *New York Times*, December 2, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/02/world/global-poverty-united-nations.html>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ UN75 Shaping Our Future Together, *Inequality—Bridging the Divide*, 2020 <https://www.un.org/en/un75/finalreport#>

²⁰ “Ending Poverty,” United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/ending-poverty#:~:text=From%201990%20to%202014%2C%20the,to%2011.2%20percent%20in%202014.>

²¹ Geoff Heinrich, David Leege, and Carrie Miller, *A User’s Guide to Integral Human Development (IHD): Practical Guidance for CRS Staff and Partners*, Catholic Relief Services (2008).

²² Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Good Economics for Hard Times* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2001).

²³ Anthony Annett, *Cathonomics*, (Georgetown University Press 2022): Chapter 3.

²⁴ As philosopher Michael Sandel argues, “...shrinking from our [moral and spiritual convictions] does not leave them undecided. It simply means the markets will decide them for us. This is the lesson of the last three decades.” Michael Sandel, *What Money Can’t Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013).

²⁵ Piraino’s presentation draws upon Patrizio Piraino, “Drivers of Mobility in the Global South,” in Vegard Iversen, Anirudh Krishna, and Kunal Sen, eds. *Social mobility in developing countries: Concepts, methods, and determinants* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

²⁶ This intuition is corroborated by a series of recent studies on how various types of labor market frictions in different African countries can result in worker misallocation and higher inequality.

²⁷ Martin Abel, Rulof Burger, Patrizio Piraino, “The value of reference letters: Experimental evidence from South Africa,” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 12 no. 3 (2020): 40-71.

²⁸ A related literature looks at a different type of market imperfection: credit market failures. If credit markets were perfect, all parents could borrow sufficient funds to optimally invest in their offspring’s human capital. In the presence of borrowing constraints, however, some parents are unable to gain access to credit and the optimal amount of human capital investment will not be realized. As a result, there will be a higher degree of intergenerational persistence for families with high-ability children but insufficient credit. Allowing for systematic variation in access to credit thus

creates a pathway of intergenerational persistence in the form of higher human capital investment by richer parents.

²⁹ Y.D. Maoz and Omer Moav, “Intergenerational mobility and the process of development,” *Economic Journal*. 109 (1999): 677-697 <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0297.00468>.

³⁰ Paul Perrin, et al., “Upholding Human Dignity: A Literature Review” (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame and Catholic Relief Services), accessed April 18, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.7274/76537082b53>.

³¹ “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions,” United Nations, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, accessed April 18, 2024, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>.

³² Pope Francis, “Fratelli Tutti” (Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2020)

³³ Paul Perrin, “MAP Chagas Project Evaluation Report” (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2019); Danice Guzman, Lila Khatiwada, and Paul Perrin, “Research to Policy: A Long-Term Impact Evaluation of the Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research Program,” 2022, <https://doi.org/10.7274/vx021c2224g>; Kerrie Holloway, “Dignity in Displacement: Case Studies from Afghanistan, Colombia, the Philippines and South Sudan” (Overseas Development Institute, March 1, 2019), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2213872111>.

³⁴ See Theresa Miller et al., “Talking About Poverty: Narratives, Counter-Narratives, and Telling Effective Stories” (FrameWorks and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, September 2021), <https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Talking-about-poverty.pdf>. Rosenthal et al., “Poverty Narratives in Popular Culture” (USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center, May 2021), https://learcenter.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/PovertyNarrativesinPopCulture_FinalReport.pdf; “Narrative Shift: From The War on Poverty to ‘Ending Welfare as We Know It,’” *The Opportunity Agenda* (blog), accessed September 28, 2023, https://opportunityagenda.org/messaging_reports/shifting-the-narrative/case-2/.

³⁵ Nancie Hudson, “The Trauma of Poverty as Social Identity,” *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 21, no. 2 (2016): 111–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2014.965979>.

³⁶ See, inter alia, Naimah Talib, “The Poor Know They’re Poor: The Roles of Shame and Stigma in the Everyday Lives of People in Poverty,” *New Mandala* (blog), August 29, 2019, <https://www.newmandala.org/the-poor-know-theyre-poor/>; Robert Walker, “Poverty, Shame, and Stigma,” in Robert Walker, ed., *The Shame of Poverty* (Oxford University Press, 2014); <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199684823.003.0004>; Robert Walker et al., “Poverty in Global Perspective: Is Shame a Common Denominator?,” *Journal of Social Policy* 42, no. 2 (April 2013): 215–33, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279412000979>.

³⁷ Clemens Sedmak, *Enacting Integral Human Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2023).

³⁸ Gbedoah Richard, “On Colonialism and Development – Why the Underdevelopment of the South Cannot Be Delinked from the Experience of the Past,” *African Journal of Governance and Development* 7, no. 1 (2018), <https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/EJC-f655b453b>.

³⁹ Sedmak, *Enacting Integral Human Development*.

⁴⁰ Irwin Loy, “Why It’s Time to Stop the Aid Logo ‘Arms Race,’” *The New Humanitarian*,

August 17, 2023, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/interview/2023/08/17/qa-why-its-time-stop-aid-logo-arms-race>.

⁴¹ W. Gyude Moore, “The Case Against Branding Development Aid in Fragile States,” *Center For Global Development*, May 16, 2018, <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/case-against-branding-development-aid-fragile-states>.

⁴² In light of the evidence and corresponding principles, when benevolent actors engage in opaque practices, data collection thereby becomes an extractive and often duplicative process, which in turn can erode trust and respect for dignity. See: The Global Campaign for Aid Transparency, “Why Aid Transparency Matters, and the Global Movement for Aid Transparency,” Briefing Paper (Publish What you Fund, 2017), <https://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/app/uploads/2017/01/Briefing-Paper-1-Why-Aid-Transparency-Matters.pdf>.

⁴³ Christian Bommer, Axel Dreher, and Marcello Perez-Alvarez, “Home Bias in Humanitarian Aid: The Role of Regional Favoritism in the Allocation of International Disaster Relief,” *Journal of Public Economics* 208 (2022): 104604, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2022.104604>.

⁴⁴ “This benevolent indignity,” Perrin writes, “arises not in the idea of infrastructure construction in itself, but in how it tends to be implemented by benevolent actors. Populations participating in evaluations by the Pulte Institute have often pointed out that while the infrastructure is appreciated when it is built, there is far too little thought provided to the maintenance and use of this infrastructure over time. When infrastructure is constructed with outside expertise, outside resources, and outside technology, it can be difficult if not impossible over time to maintain the infrastructure in a resource-constrained setting.” For an extended discussion of these and other “benevolent indignities, see Paul Perrin, “Benevolent Indignities,” in *World Development*

⁴⁵ Wein et al have demonstrated that there is empirical demand for more dignity-affirming work in the global affairs space. In a survey of non-profit professionals, nearly 80 percent of respondents felt that their organizations could do a better job at carrying out their work in ways that better respected human dignity, with around half of these same respondents also saying they would be willing to take a pay cut if it meant working at an organization that was more respectful and dignity-affirming. Tom Wein, Heather Lanthorn, and Torben Fischer, “First Steps toward Building Respectful Development: Three Experiments on Dignity in Aid in Kenya and the United States,” *World Development Perspectives* 29 (2023): 100485, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wdp.2023.Affirming> dignity may also have a positive impact on donor behavior: one study found that prospective donors are willing to donate up to \$30 more if an organization mentions investing in efforts to recognize the individuality, equality, or autonomy of program participants. Tom Wein, “The Dignity Report: Three Years of Research on Dignity and International Development” (The Dignity Project, 2021), <https://dignityproject.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/The-Dignity-Report.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Perrin et al., “Upholding Human Dignity.”

⁴⁷ Paul Perrin, John Hembling, and Tony Castleman, “Measuring Respect for Human Dignity among Project Participants” (Catholic Relief Services, February 21, 2024), <https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/measuring-respect-human-dignity-among-project-participants>.

⁴⁸ The tools are publicly available, and peer-reviewed publications on the literature review

and tool validation are forthcoming. In addition, the Pulte Institute launched a partnership with IDinsight to conduct research on dignity-affirming practices in the poverty alleviation and global development fields to identify the most promising programmatic practices in this area.

⁴⁹ Mary Catherine Beach et al., “Do Patients Treated With Dignity Report Higher Satisfaction, Adherence, and Receipt of Preventive Care?,” *The Annals of Family Medicine* 3, no. 4 (July 1, 2005): 331–38, <https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.328>; Kerrie Holloway, “Dignity in Displacement: Case Studies from Afghanistan, Colombia, the Philippines and South Sudan,” ODI Global, March 1, 2019; Jeremy Shapiro, “The Impact of Recipient Choice on Aid Effectiveness,” *World Development* 116, (2019): 137–49, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.10.010>; Wein, Lanthorn, and Fischer, “First Steps toward Building Respectful Development.”

⁵⁰ Dignity Symposium Attendees, “Dignity Research Agenda: Consensus Statement.”

⁵¹ As quoted in Tracy Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World* (Random House Publishing, 2003.)

⁵² Harvard’s Kennedy School has contributed to this field since the 1960s through its Mason Program, a one-year Professional degree program for mid-career civil servants. They have trained scores of such professionals who today hold senior roles often as First Secretaries in ministries across the world, providing quality leadership within the civil service.