

# Oxford Policy Management

## Research Programmes and Methods

**EDI**

**THRIVE**

**DEEP**

**BIDS ABCD December 2024**



# Three Problems for Development Research

- Data is imperfect, incomplete, or unreliable – particularly so when studying dynamic processes.
- The phenomena we wish to study are the product of complex interactions between a range of factors that cannot be understood within a single disciplinary or methodological framework.
- Investigating the sustainability or external validity of policies and interventions depends on empirical studies that are conducted over long periods and properly understood in terms of context.



Economic Development & Institutions (EDI) was a collaborative research programme launched in 2015 and funded by the UK's FCDO. It comprised four research activities across twenty countries, researching the relationship between institutions and economic development.

1. Producing path-finding papers that take stock of existing evidence on specific issues
2. Developing an institutional diagnostic tool that identifies institutional weaknesses critical to economic development
3. Conducting coordinated randomised control trials (RCTs) that seek to provide robust evidence on the effectiveness of different levers for change
4. Undertaking research for in-depth case studies that analyse interactions between formal and informal institutions in relation to growth and development

# The Institutional Diagnostic Project

- Idea

*Economic outcomes are shaped by institutions which, in turn, are shaped by political economy. Reciprocally, political economy is determined by the ways in which economic resources are allocated. Need to understand processes of institutional change and the interactions between institutions.*

- Objective:

*Explore the way in which various types of institutional features affect the functioning of the economy and the development of a country, the ultimate goal being to detect the most serious flaws in its institutional scaffolding.*

- But such a diagnostic should come with:

*a reflection on reforms likely to remove institutional obstacles and the political economy context in which they would have to be decided, and, possibly, implemented*

Practically, IDP applies an in-depth exploration method to 4 developing countries with comparable income level but sufficiently different geographical, cultural and historical context to test the ability of the method to account for the role of context.

A synthesis volume summarizes what is learned from these case studies

# The Institutional Diagnostic Project



# Structure of country studies

## I) General Analysis

- Economic and political history of the country
- Identification of economic constraints to development (along growth diagnostics' line)
- Governance indicators of the country compared to neighbors or 'peer' countries
- Surveying stakeholders about institutional obstacles to development

## II) In-depth analysis of institutional factors in 'critical' areas

- Critical areas suggested by preceding general analysis and surveys and covering key sectors, public good and service delivery or public administration
- In each area, the diagnostic identifies the institutional obstacles to efficiency gains, potential reforms and their political economy
- Analysis mostly authored by local scholars, and commented by global experts

## III) Synthesis: general diagnostic

- The institutional diagnostic table
- Diagnostic and recommendations

# Institutional factors behind Bangladesh's achievements and challenges

Deep factors	Proximate causes	Institutional weaknesses	Economic and social consequences
<p>Political settlement (political and industrial elites against labour)</p> <p>Winner-takes-all electoral democracy</p> <p>Vertical structure of political parties</p> <p>Vibrant civil society</p> <p>Population pressure on land</p> <p>Role of donors</p> <p><i>Contemporaneous deep factors</i></p> <p>Dominant party politics</p> <p>Dominance of the RMG sector and sustained fast growth</p>	<p>Elite-capture of government (e.g. RMG-entrepreneurial class)</p> <p>Weakness of labour organizations</p> <p>Lack of resources and skills in the public sector</p> <p>Stable corruption equilibrium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anti-reform coalitions</li> <li>- Clientelism</li> </ul> <p>Inadequate laws and administrative organisation</p> <p>Opacity and unaccountability</p>	<p><i>Supremacy of 'deals' over formal industrial (and development) policy making</i></p> <p><i>Ineffective regulation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Banking system</li> <li>- Tax system</li> <li>- Labour conditions</li> </ul> <p><i>Weak State capacity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weak delivery of public goods and services</li> <li>- Corruption</li> <li>- Ineffective and corrupt judiciary</li> </ul>	<p>Past successful development based on RMG-exports but threats on future growth</p> <p>Excessive export concentration</p> <p>Suppressed labor regime</p> <p>Gender discrimination</p> <p>NPL leakage of resources</p> <p>Misallocation of investments</p> <p>Unattractive investment climate</p> <p>Abnormally low tax revenues</p> <p>Limited quantity and quality of public goods (education, infrastructure)</p> <p>Rising inequality and slowing down of poverty reduction</p> <p>Compensation of limited public goods by, and poverty reduction role of NGOs</p>

# Evidence for Scaling Childhood Development

BIDS, Dhaka, December 2024

10<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Umar Salam



# Thrive Research Programme

---

- We have 5 focus countries: Bangladesh, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Tanzania, Kiribati
- Thrive is a research programme running for 3 years from July 2023 to June 2026
- Each focus country has a £3m budget (Kiribati ~£1m).

## Objectives

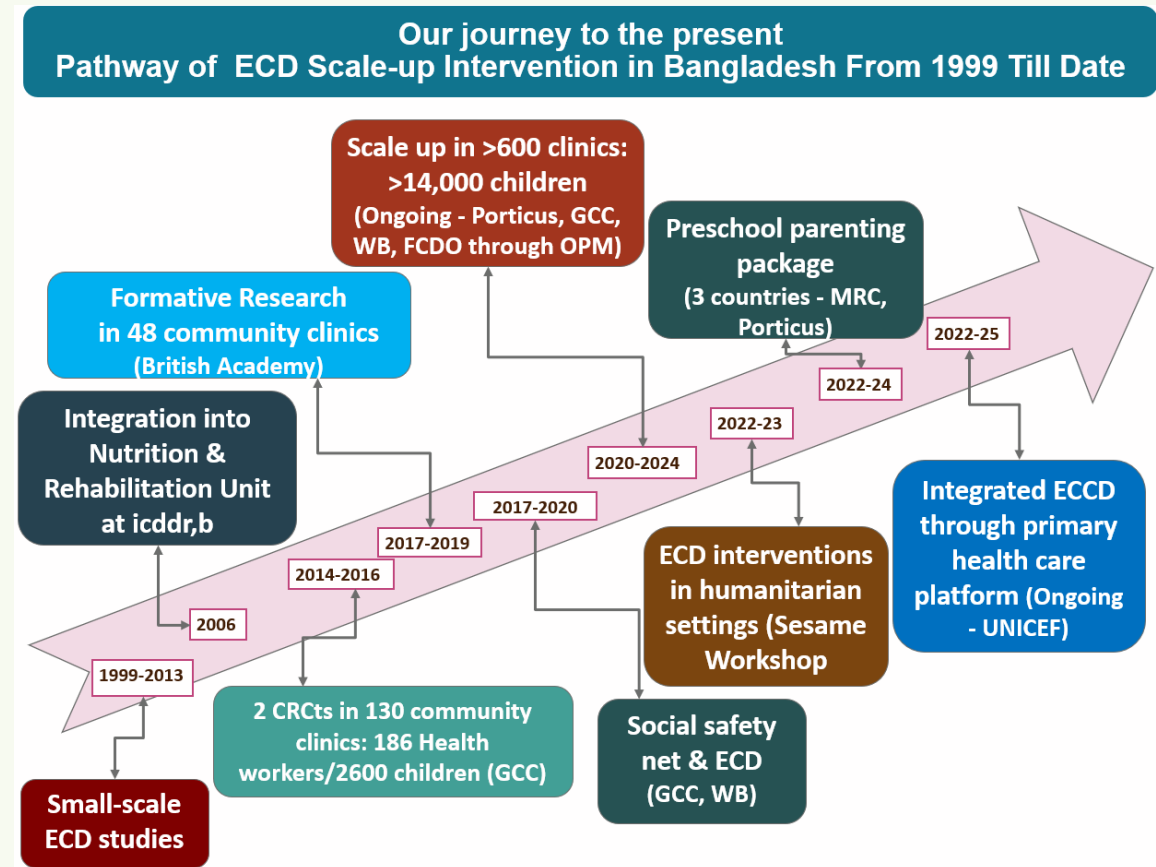
- **Global Evidence:** Increasing the global evidence base of quality ECD programming at scale.
- **Government Capacity:** Increasing government capacity to deliver evidence-based ECD policies and programming.
- **ECD programming:** Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of ECD programming for pilots and at scale
- **Research Capacity:** Strengthening the academic and research community of ECD practice.
- **Convening a Network of Researchers & Practitioners.**

# Bangladesh: Research Projects

The Bangladesh portfolio is led by three main projects.

Two are aimed at helping government research the scaling of two piloting experiments that take different routes to improving ECD at scale:

- 1) The first, researches ECD parenting programmes delivered by Community Health Clinics (CHC), a key pillar of the national ECD strategy;
- 2) The second, researches improved ECD through integration of Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCTs) with home-based delivery of a child stimulation.
- 3) A third project develops and evaluates the provision of day care and parenting services to women workers in the Ready-Made Garments sector – the largest formal sector employer in the Bangladesh private sector.





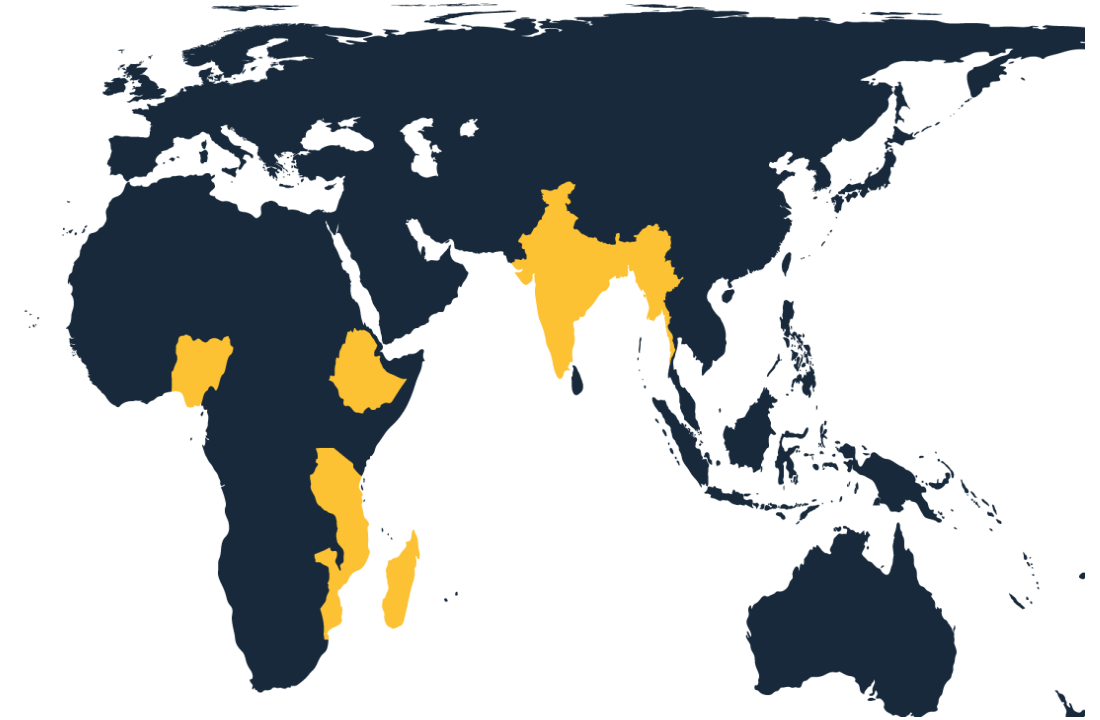
**Data and Evidence to End Extreme Poverty  
(DEEP)  
BIDS ABCD Conference  
December 2024**

# Overview of DEEP

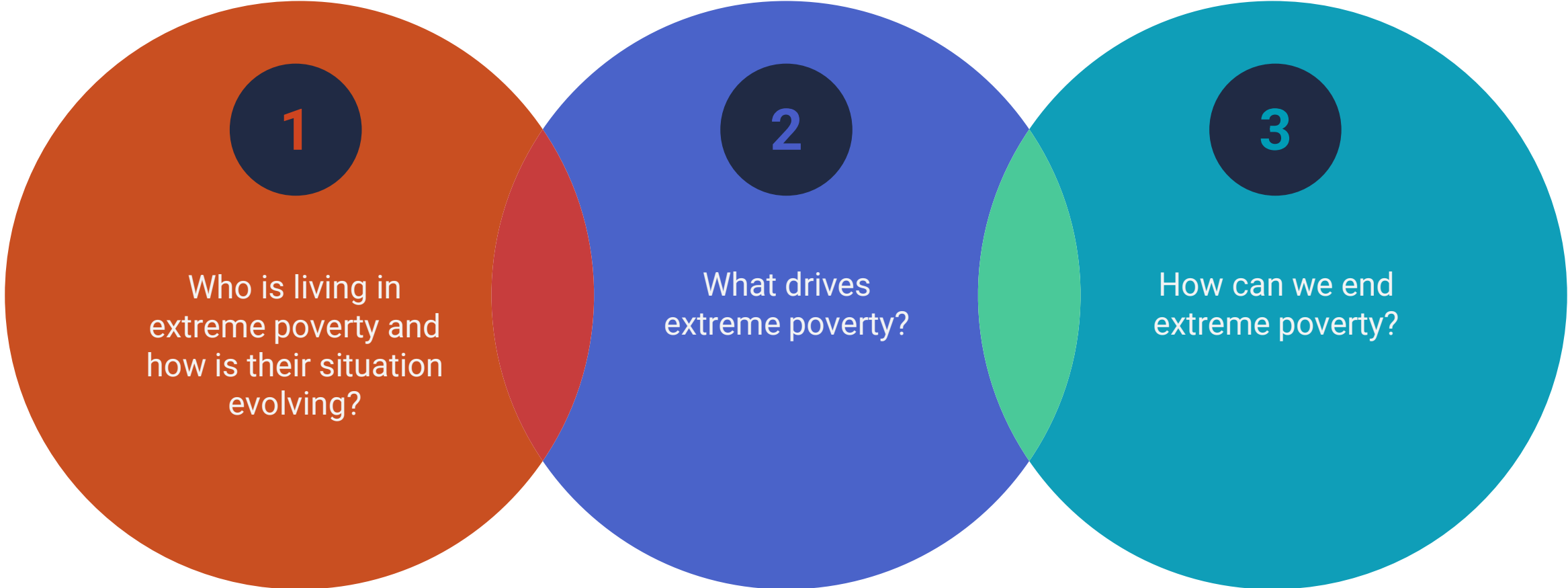
Launched in 2020. 7-10 years. Funded by FCDO

To generate high-quality evidence and new insights into who lives in extreme poverty, what is driving it, and what works to reduce extreme poverty.

8 focus countries: Bangladesh, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, India, and Myanmar.



# Our research themes



# Theme 1: Methodologies and Tools

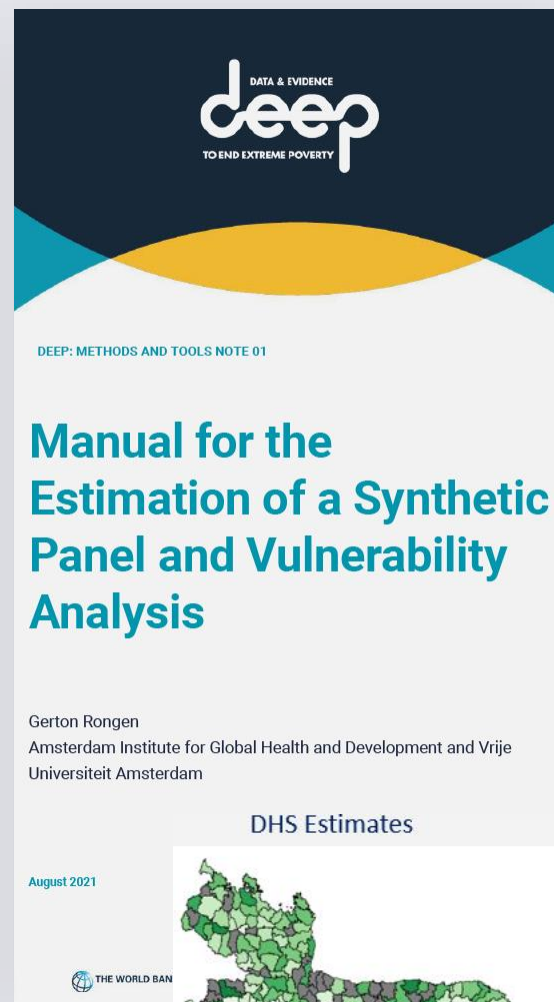
Peter Lanjouw (Amsterdam), Nikos Tzavidis (Southampton)

**Synthetic Panels:** to provide nuanced understanding of poverty dynamics for effective design of policies and interventions, e.g. to distinguish between chronic and transient poverty; to study vulnerability. To overcome the difficulties due to the non-availability of panel data.

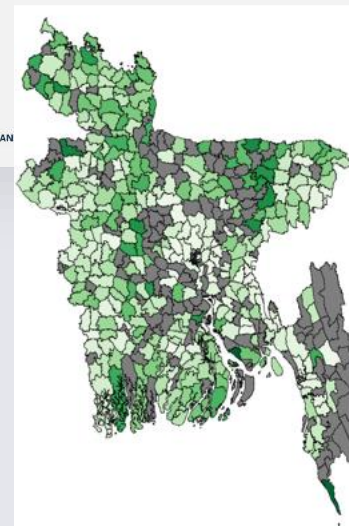
**Small Area Estimation:** to integrate surveys and geospatial data to provide low-cost, granular poverty mapping that can be frequently updated to understand the spatial distribution of poverty.

- populations not previously measured
- community level analysis rather than regional (allows bespoke policies vs “standardised” -> increased cost-effectiveness)
- can be extended to understand shocks and implication for effective social protection.
- Easy to use and adaptable.

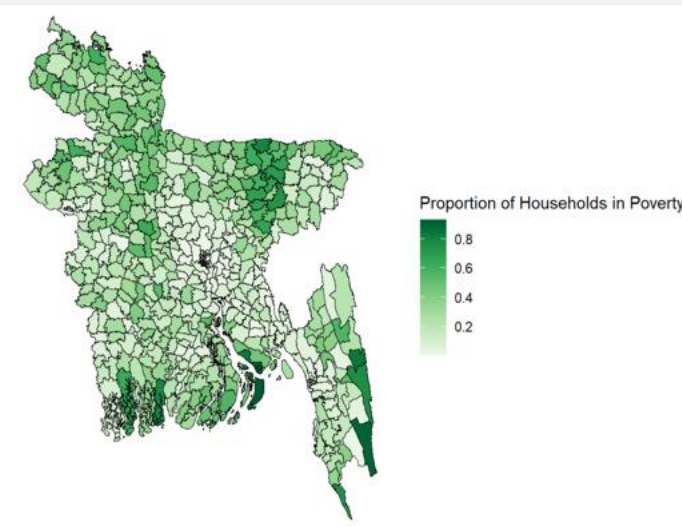
**Longitudinal Village Studies:** to provide insight into multi-decade impacts of structural reforms (e.g land reform; credit markets; new technology) and COVID on poverty.



DHS Estimates

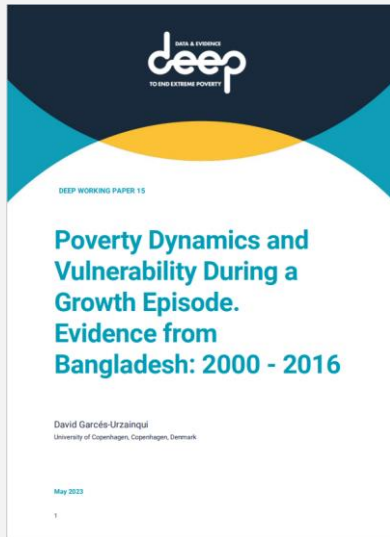


Our FH Model Estimates



# Theme 2: Drivers of Poverty

(Finn Tarp (Copenhagen), Vidya Diwakar (IDS), Amanda Lenhardt (KCL))



**Thematic Reviews and Political Economy Analysis:** towards a better understanding of causality in poverty dynamics: structural factors underlying poverty and the relationship between poverty and other dynamic processes ('drivers): climate change, fragility and conflict, growth and technological change, migration, urbanisation, changing social norms



**Mixed methods research:** to contextualise poverty transitions in terms of 'people' (demographics, livelihoods) versus 'places' (geographies, crises); to understand vulnerability in the context of multiple, intersecting crises; to analyse sustainability of poverty transitions.

**Evidence Gap Maps:** to survey the literature and engage with stakeholders in each focus country to identify knowledge gaps and avenues for future research.



# Theme 3: “What Works” for Reducing Poverty:

(John Hoddinott, Cornell)

- **Cash Transfer + Behaviour Change:** 10+ years of survey results in Bangladesh are showing the impact of cash transfers + behaviour change communication. Do such interventions offer protective effects for household food security against shocks that occur several years after interventions end? Do they provide resilience against future shocks?
- **Livestock Insurance:** 10 years of survey results in S. Ethiopia are showing significant advantages of Index Based Livelihoods Insurance over Cash Transfers for Pastoralists.
- **Mobile Phones + Phone Directories:** does the addition of phone directories help the poor to better access markets and so improve the prices they face both for their production and consumption. (Tanzania)
- **Who to target and how to target when everyone is poor:** 80+% of households in southern Madagascar (Grand Sud) fall below the extreme poverty line in any five-year period. On what basis should government and partners target and provide social assistance?



# Work underway for 2024-25

- **Focus Country Engagement & Challenge Fund Launch**
  - Use: the DEEP Challenge Fund; “evidence gap mapping” and new measurement and analysis techniques to add new energy to national poverty research
  - Aim to “crowd-in” additional funds by linking poverty to national strategy.
  - Tanzania launched successfully in early Dec 2023. Ethiopia in September 2024. Bangladesh in December 2024.
  - Up to five further country engagements to be launched in 2025
- **Poverty Measurement**
  - Further extensions of EMDI, SAE to explore community level poverty dynamics and climate change.
  - Multi-Dimensional Measures being applied to synthetic panels.
- **Drivers of Poverty**
  - Empirical Work in Nigeria on nexus of climate change, conflict and poverty – ongoing.
  - Disability and poverty – new work on the cost of disability and the implications for national poverty level estimates and social protection transfers.
  - Empirical work expected on social norms (incl gender) and urban poverty.
- **What Works?**
  - New results coming for Tanzania and improving labour market access and asset returns for the poor.
  - Madagascar food security intervention and poverty results expected.
- **International Conference** in June 2025 in Arusha, Tanzania.

<https://povertyevidence.org/>