

DEVELOPMENT



PATHWAYS

The use of language when advocating for universality

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The importance of language and the words we use

Language shapes our thinking – and it also shapes the thinking of those with whom we communicate

Therefore, when advocating for universality, we need think carefully about the language we use

How should we describe the recipients of universal schemes?



What terminology should we use for universal schemes?



How should we explain the objectives of 'social security'?



How should we describe programmes for 'the poor'?

Don't focus on helping 'the poor' but on the needs and rights of everyone

Dominant poverty narrative

Post-1980s neo-liberal consensus stressed helping **'the poor'** and low, regressive taxes

Encapsulated in the Washington Consensus and Millennium Development Goals

Yet, the main beneficiaries of benefits for the 'poor' are **the rich**

Rights and universality

Post-2nd World War consensus focused on benefits for **'everyone'** and higher, progressive taxes

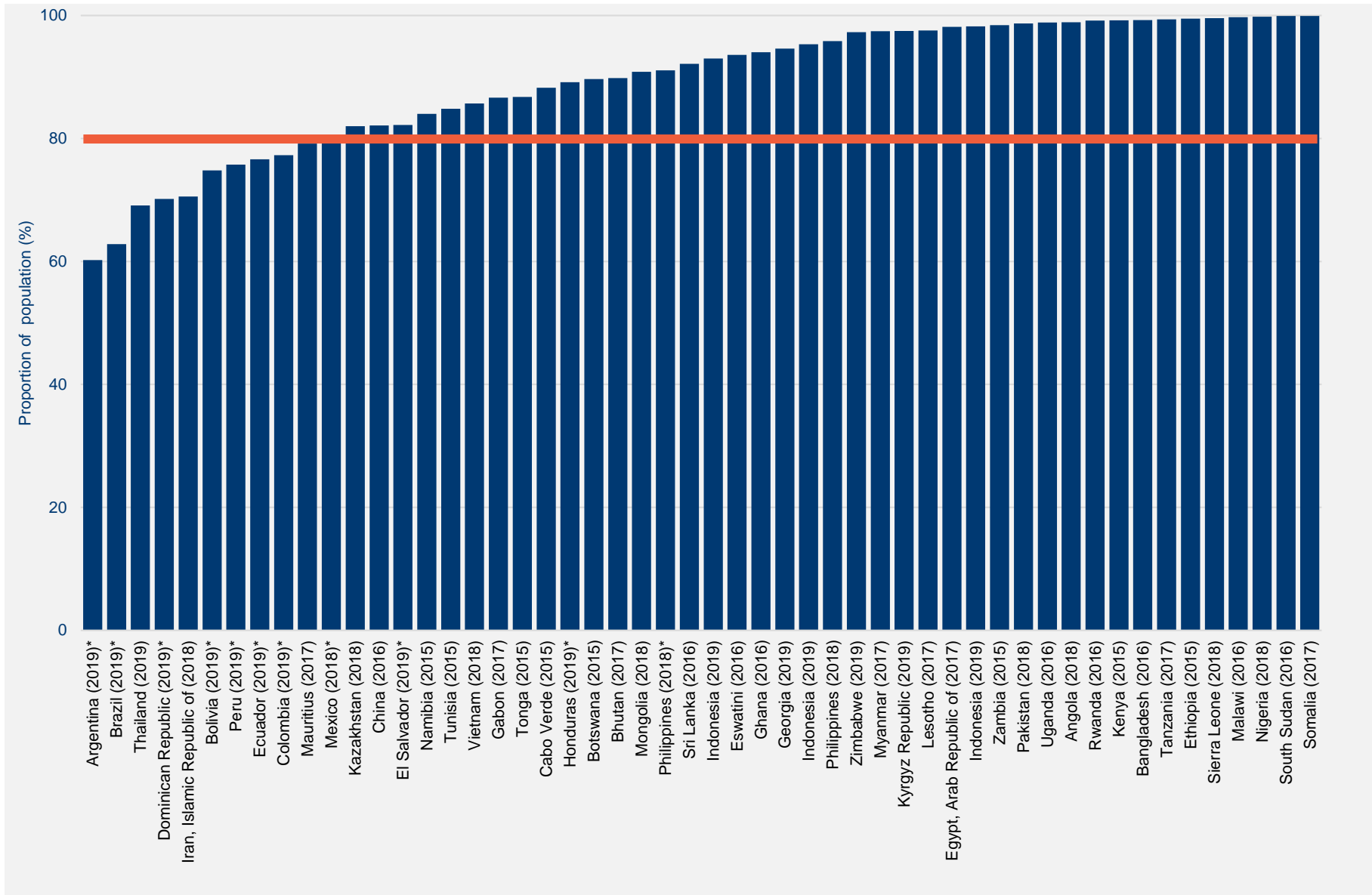
UDHR: **"Everyone**, as a member of society, has the **right to social security"**

The main beneficiaries of universal schemes are those on **low incomes**

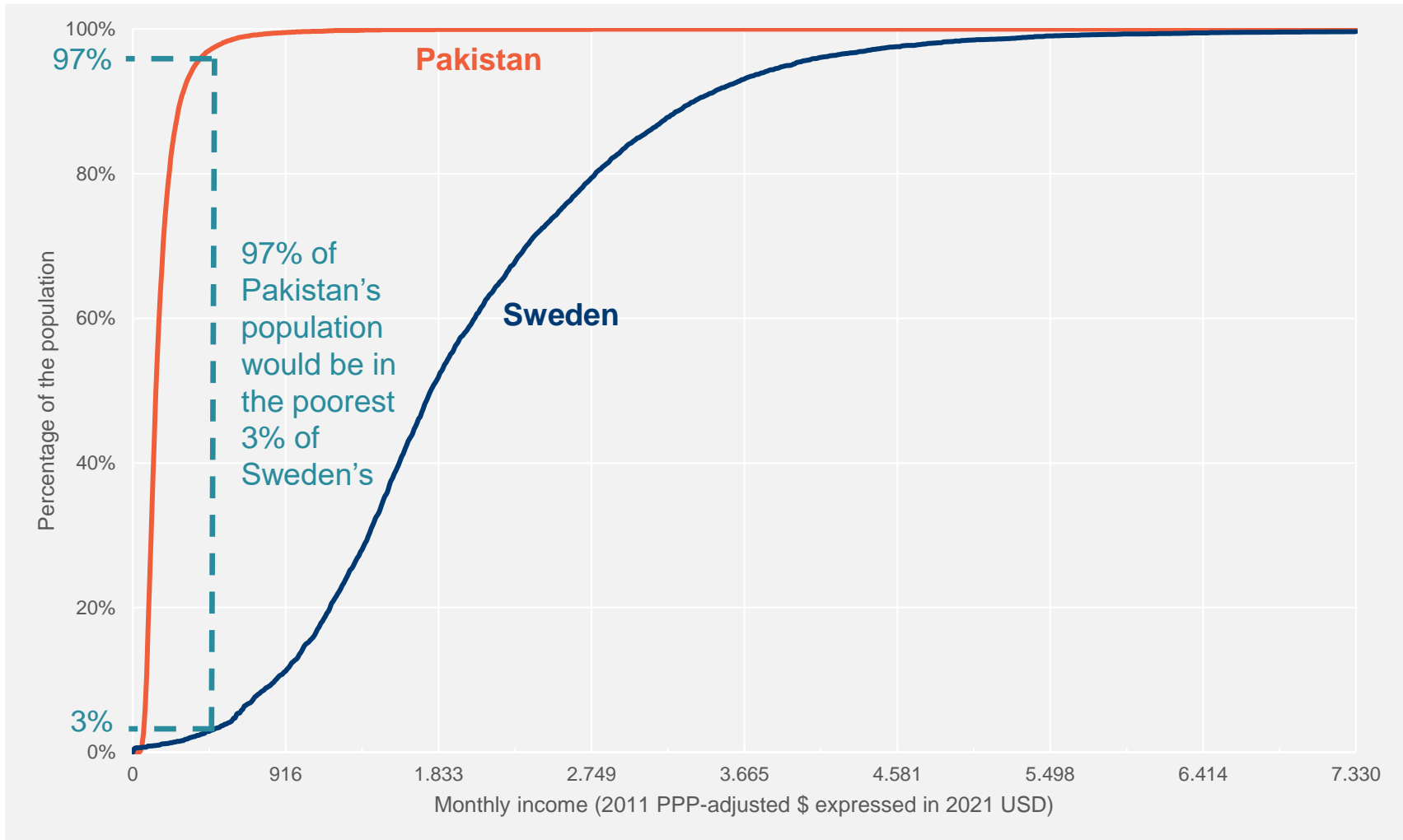
Therefore:

- Those promoting the interests of the rich argue for means testing, low taxes and benefits for the poor
- Those interested in eradicating poverty promote universality, higher levels of taxation and benefits for everyone

Proportion of the population who have lower incomes than the poorest 5% of the population in Sweden



Comparison of welfare distribution in Pakistan and Sweden

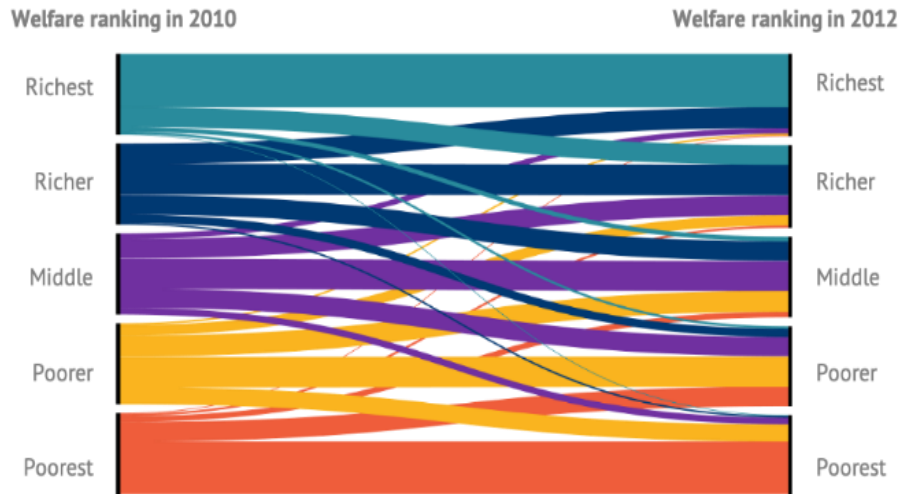


Source: PovcalNet API (accessed in September 2022). Notes: for Sweden welfare is defined as income, and for Jordan it is consumption

Household incomes are highly dynamic and a group called 'the poor' is a fictional construct

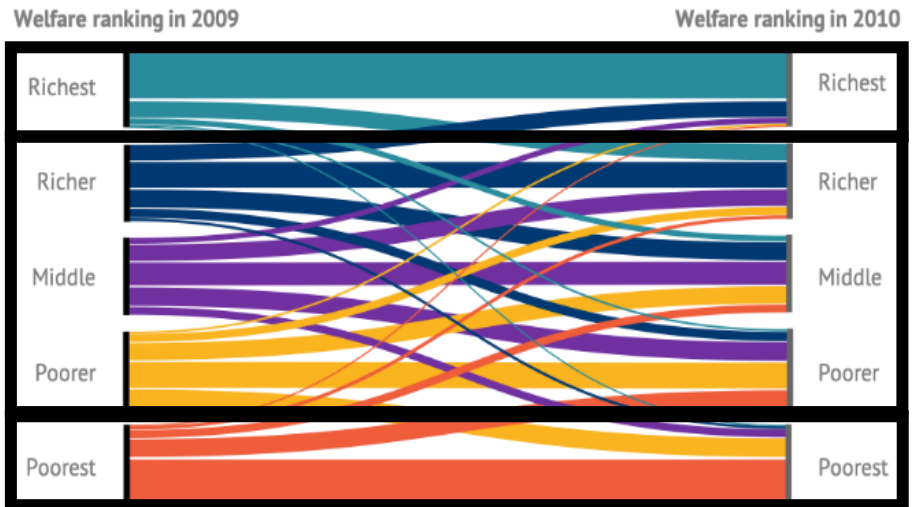
Welfare dynamics in Vietnam

Movement of individuals across consumption quintiles between 2010 and 2012

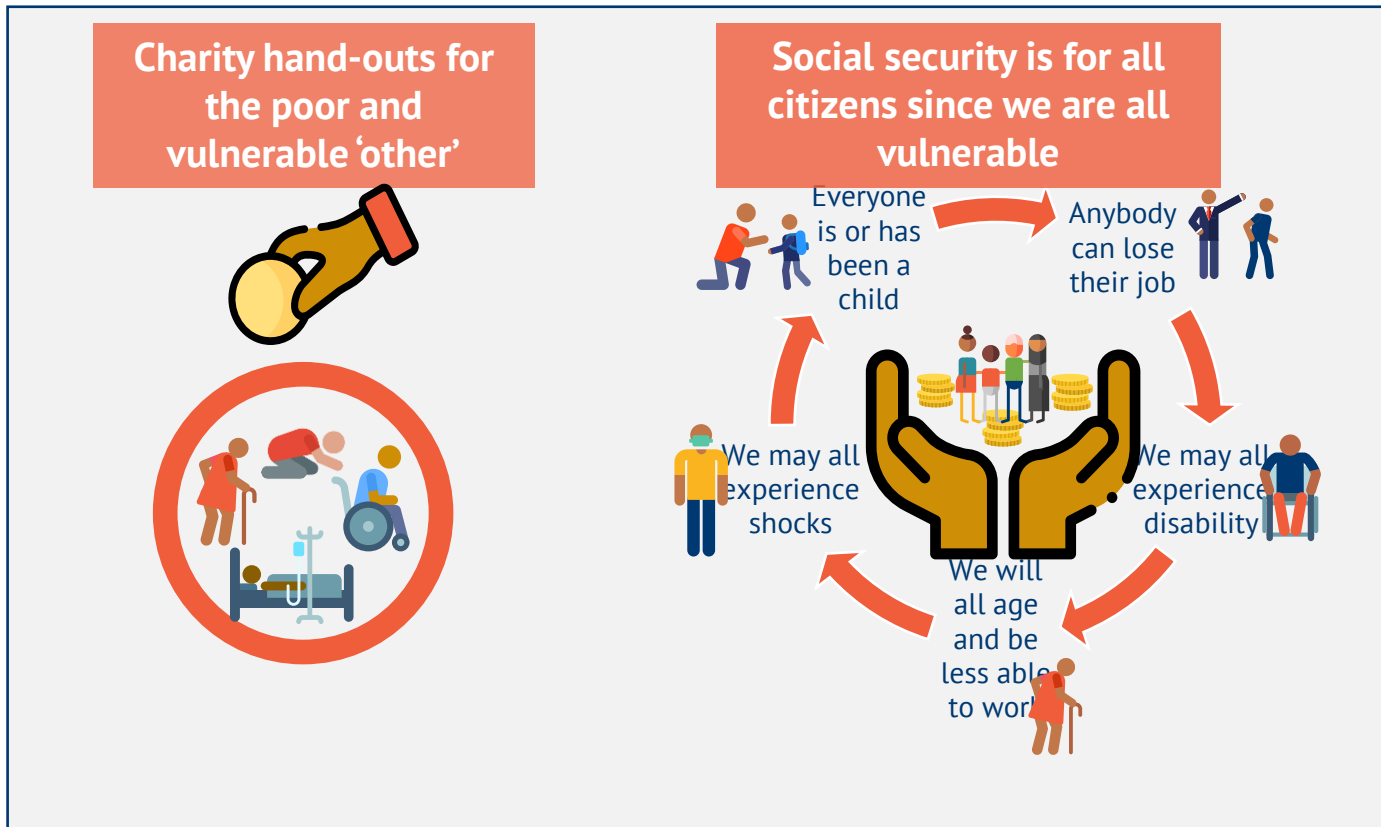


Welfare dynamics in Indonesia

Movement of individuals across consumption quintiles between 2009 and 2010



Don't refer to 'vulnerable groups' but highlight that we are all vulnerable

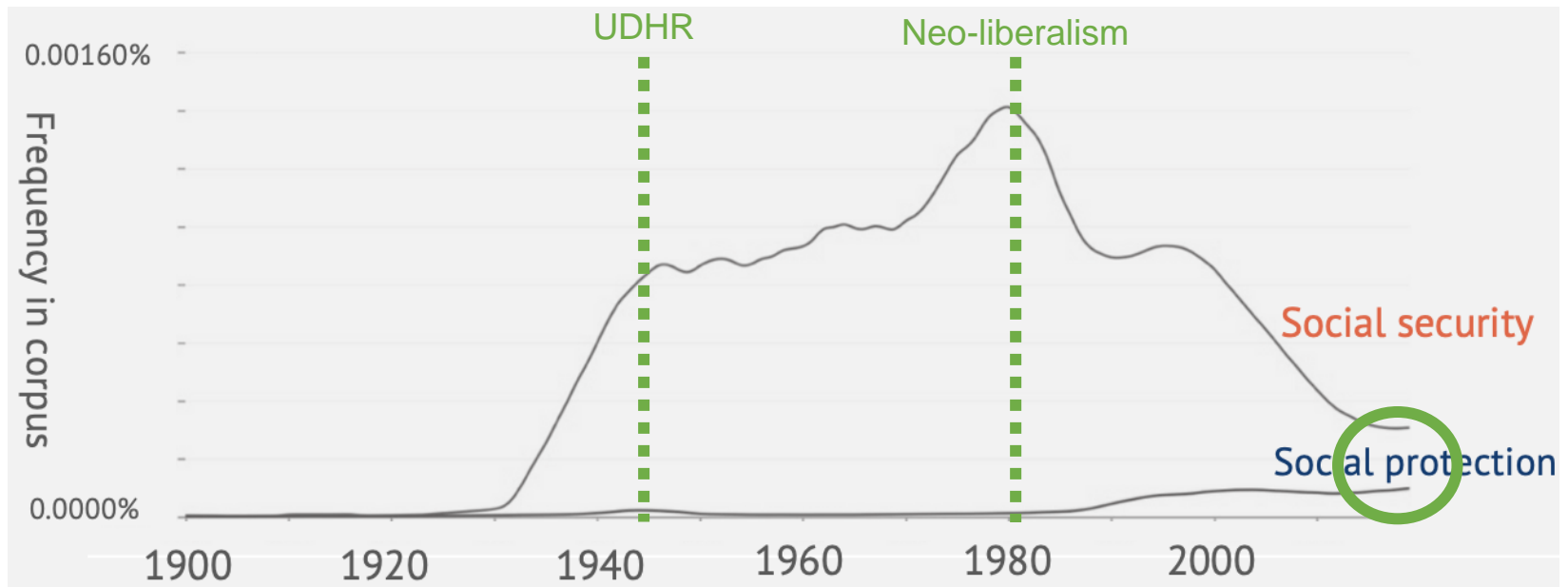


Don't use 'tackling poverty' when describing the aims of social security

Use alternatives synonymous with benefiting everyone in society:

- Raising standards of living
- Addressing risks (such as those we all face across the lifecycle)
- Ensuring everyone has the guarantee of a minimum income
- Offering income security to all members of society
- Ensuring everyone can experience lives of dignity
- Contributing to building a strong national social contract

Use 'social security' rather than 'social protection'



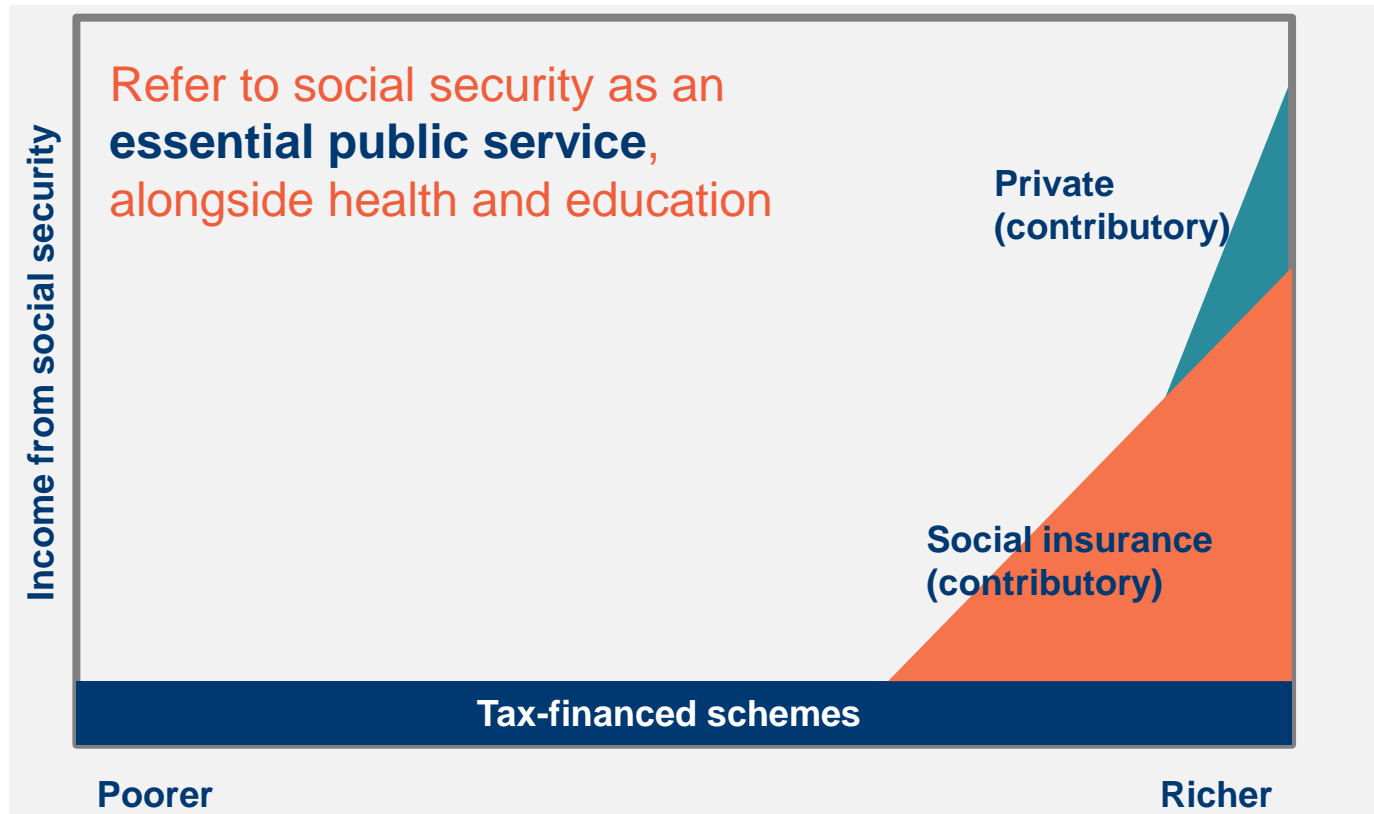
Tax-financed social security
↑
Sounds like charity

Child benefit
↑
Sounds like charity

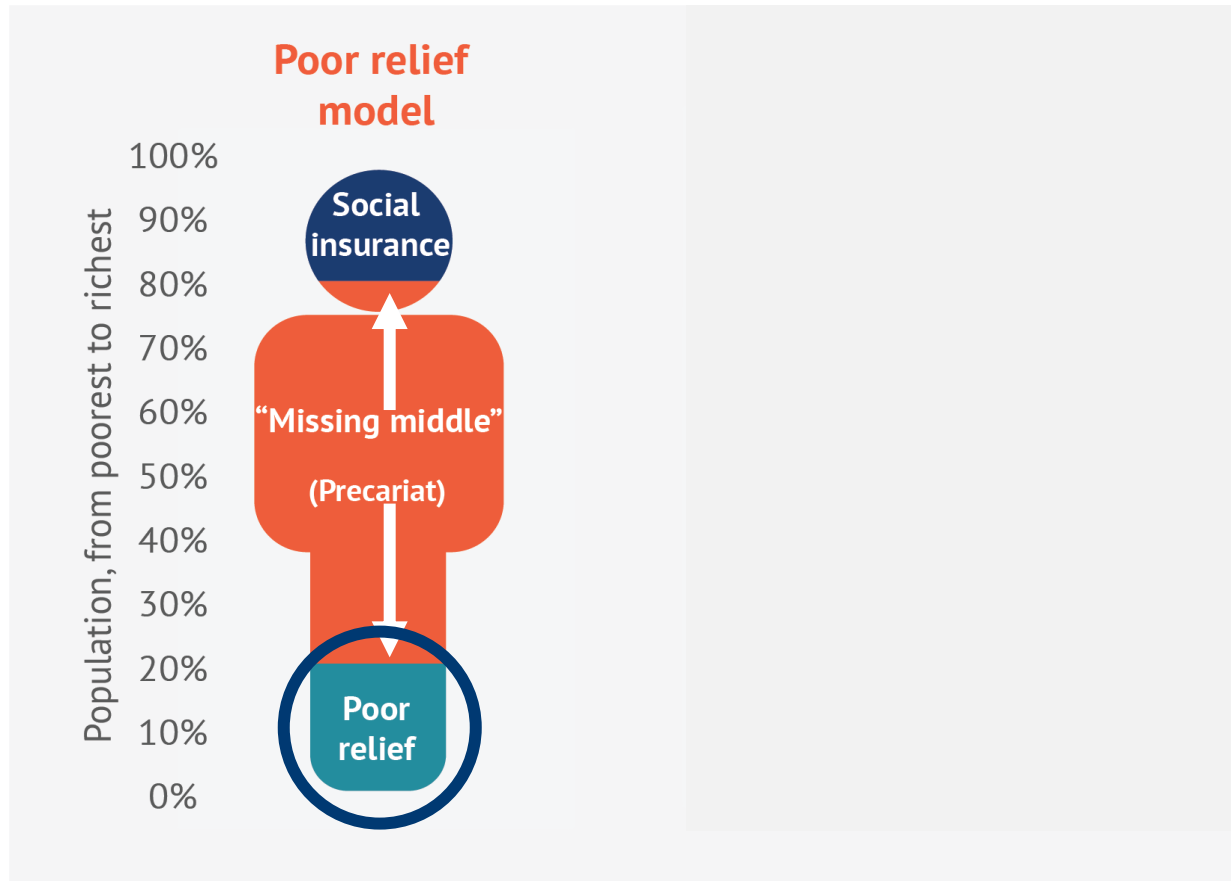
Citizens' Pension
↑
Everyone contributes

Personal Independence Payment
↑
Sounds like a project

Argue for universal, multi-tiered, social security systems



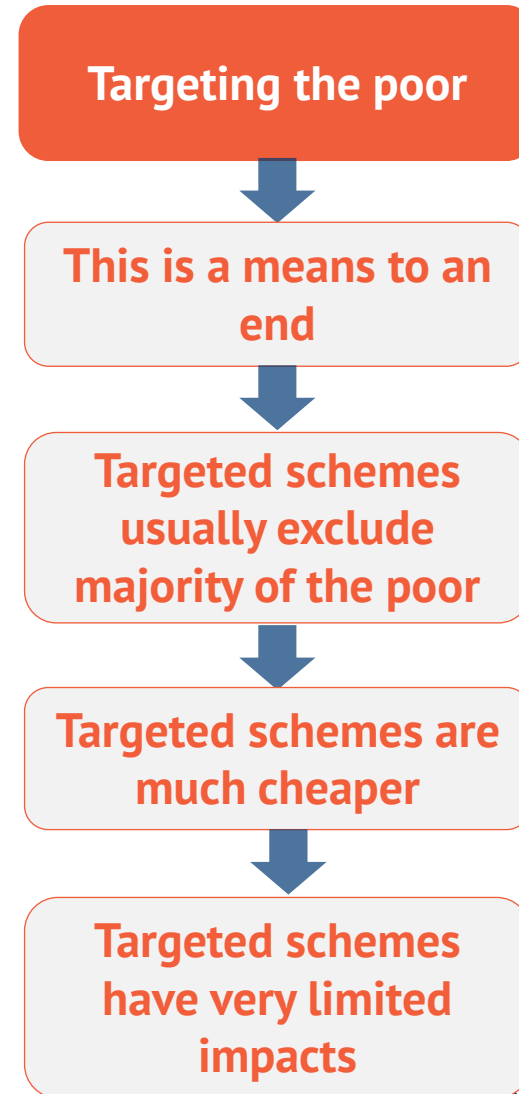
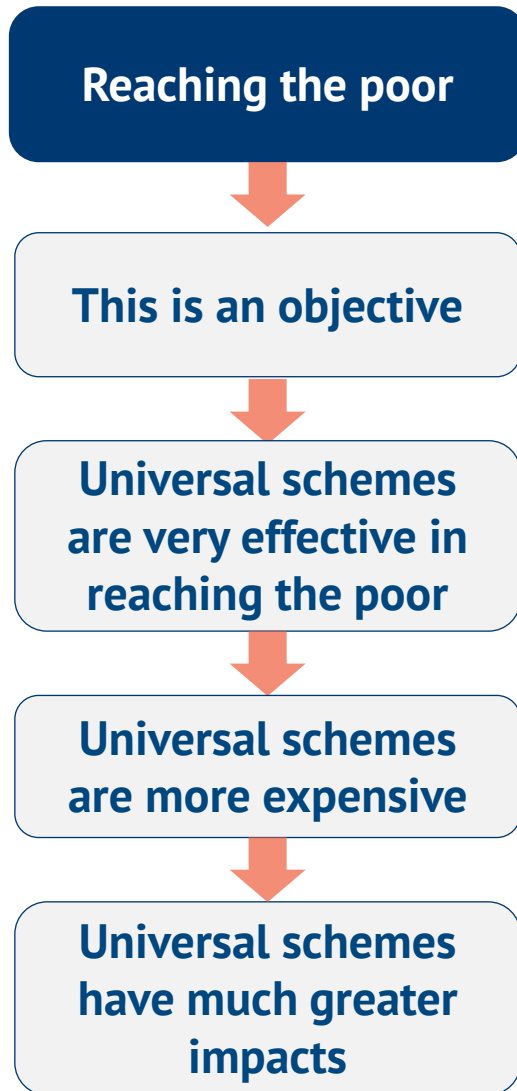
Characterise poverty-targeted schemes/systems as 19th Century Poor Relief



Accept that there is a role for residual poor relief as part of a universal social security system

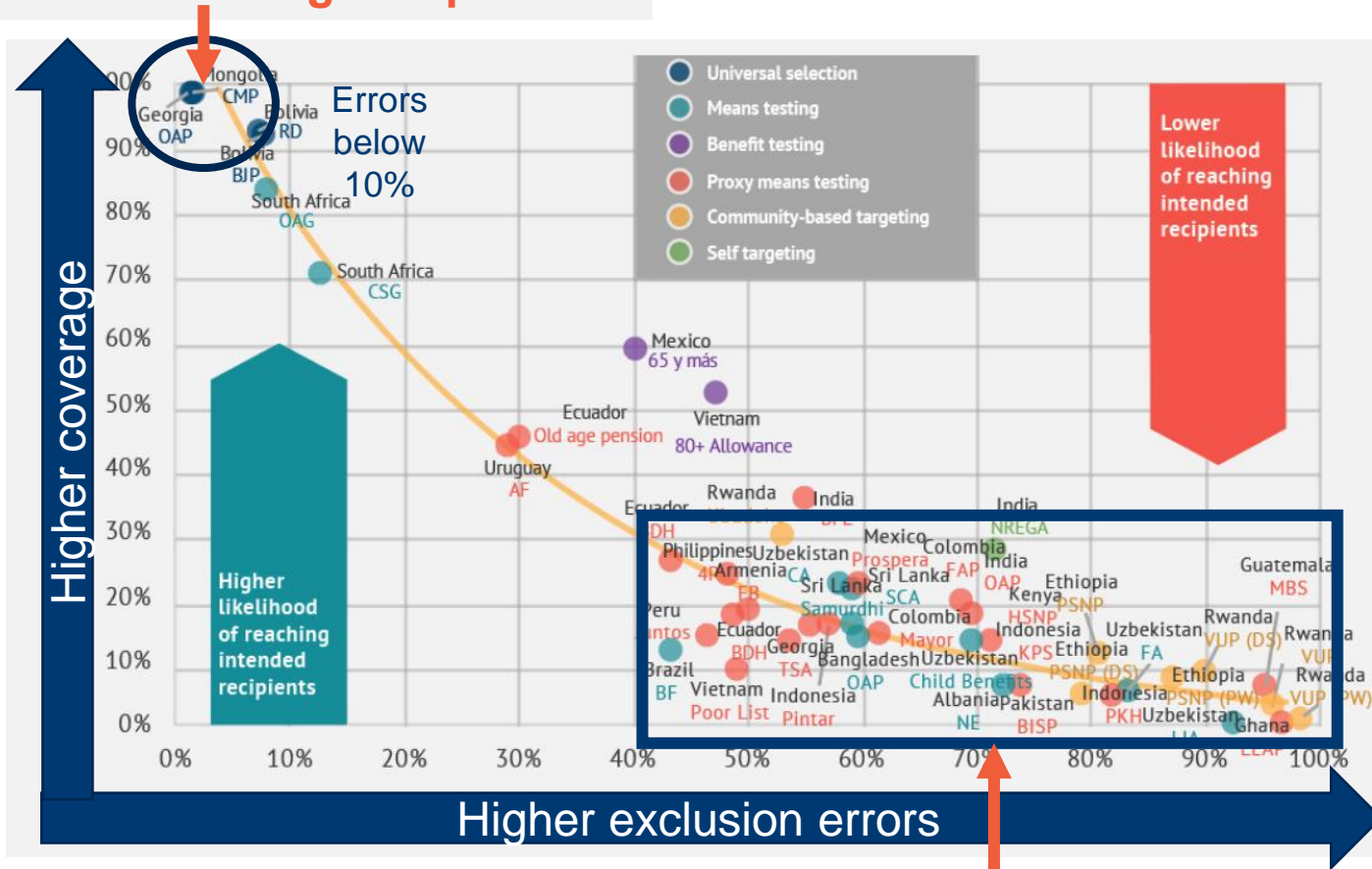


When engaging with advocates of poverty targeting, argue consistently for the importance of 'reaching the poor'



Universality is by far the most effective means of 'reaching the poor'

Universal schemes are very effective in reaching 'the poor'



Means-tested programmes fail in reaching 'the poor'

Thank you