



Workshop on Multidimensional Poverty Indices for Poverty Reduction Strategies

Beirut, 28-30 November 2022

1. Background

The Sustainable Development Goals have enshrined in Target 1.2 of Goal 1 to, by 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions. In 2015, Member States pledged to leave no one behind in the implementation of the Agenda and promised to reach the furthest behind first. Following several global crises in recent years – including the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and climate change, all of which have likely hit the poorest disproportionately more – much of the progress achieved so far in reducing poverty is at risk of being reversed. In fact, in Arab countries in particular, the regression in monetary and multidimensional poverty reduction preceded recent global reversals since many conflicts and violent events have been ongoing prior to start of the pandemic. The last decade of action towards 2030 thus appears to be ever more challenging and requires bold efforts to induce an acceleration in multidimensional poverty reduction in Arab countries.

The socio-economic response by many governments to the repercussions of the pandemic has shown that concerted policy efforts are indeed possible and that many countries have the capacity to design new ad-hoc measures and undertake immediate actions. Several countries have for example adopted multidimensional vulnerability frameworks which have either built on existing measures of multidimensional poverty or were newly developed to better guide policy.

Prior to the pandemic, several Latin American, African, and Asian countries had already implemented advanced tools for multidimensional poverty measurement which have helped to guide policies to reduce poverty in all its forms everywhere. These national Multidimensional Poverty Indices (MPIs) have become official statistics of poverty for the respective countries and have been become yardsticks to monitor SDG Target 1.1. Furthermore, national MPIs have become tools for action in many of these countries. Information from national MPIs in several countries has had provided concrete policy information on, for example, budget allocations and localized public investments required to tackle the simultaneous deprivations experienced by the poorest.

Once fully established and tracked over time, national MPIs have shown to be suitable tools for monitoring, planning, and importantly also for targeting of resources towards the poorest subgroups and subnational regions.

Regional Context in Building & Using National MPIs

In most Arab countries, as in most other regions, money-metric poverty has been used as the main official reference for poverty measurement and policy interventions. However, several countries in the region have been in the process of developing and institutionalizing national MPIs to complement existing measures of monetary



poverty.

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has been partnering with many Governments in the region – often jointly together with the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) at the University of Oxford and UN partner agencies – to develop adequate measures of multidimensional poverty tailored to each country’s specific national context. These national MPIs are designed to provide a clear picture of where and how people are poor, enabling a more efficient allocation of resources and enhanced coordination of policies across different social spheres. As shown in a few countries already, the new national MPIs allow for targeting sectors and regions that are the most in need of support, in line with the principle of leaving no one behind.

In addition, ESCWA has developed several packages for Member States and their respective policy makers to a) design a national MPI easily without requiring a technical background (the Multidimensional poverty Assist Tool or MAT), and b) an Optimization Tool which allows Member States to guide poverty reduction strategies based on the national MPI in place and the targets set by the Member State. Both tools have been used by ESCWA and Member States in the last year to both build new MPIs and guide poverty reduction strategies. With the need to accelerate poverty reduction in the years ahead, there are many lessons to be learnt from existing measures and past experiences in developing and using MPIs for poverty reduction.

2. Objectives

Against this background, the UN ESCWA is organizing – and in partnership with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the Leagues of Arab States (LAS) – a regional workshop on the use of national MPIs for policy and poverty reduction strategies. The workshop has the following objectives:

- To introduce the concept of multidimensional poverty (including regional national MPIs) and inequality in the Arab region
- To facilitate South-South learning with global policy makers to share knowledge with Arab leaders
- To provide hands-on experience in using ESCWA’s Multidimensional-Poverty Assist Tool (MAT) platform and ESCWA optimization tool
- To exchange knowledge on best practices in using national MPIs to inform social policies and national reform
- To exchange knowledge on using national MPIs for monitoring, planning purposes and as a tool for poverty reduction strategies



3. Topics

- (1) Poverty and current development challenges in the Arab region
- (2) Existing multidimensional poverty measures
- (3) Experiences from other world regions in using national MPIs for social policies
- (4) ESCWA's tools (MAT and optimization tool for poverty reduction)
- (5) Using the MPI to inform poverty reduction strategies

4. Outcomes

- (1) Enhanced capability of participants in using national MPIs for policy purposes
- (2) Empowered participants to use the MAT and the optimization tool
- (3) Awareness of global and regional best practices and enhanced ability to adapt them to the national context

5. Participation and registration

Participants will include government officials from the Ministries of Planning and Ministries of Social Affairs/Development or related government offices from Arab States. In addition, international experts and policy makers from other world regions will be invited to share experiences. In total, around 40 participants will be present.

6. Organization, format, venue, and dates

The workshop is organized by ESCWA, in partnership with UN DESA and the LAS. Sessions include time for presentations as well as for discussions and Q&A.

Dates: Monday 28 November to Wednesday 30 November 2022.

Time: Workshop sessions will be from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm (Beirut time).

Venue: ESCWA, Beirut, Lebanon

7. Working language

Arabic and English are the working languages of the workshop. Simultaneous interpretation services will be provided in these two languages throughout the workshop.



8. Additional information

Further information and documentation is provided at the following URLs:

- Workshop website:
<https://www.unescwa.org/events/multidimensional-poverty-indices-poverty-reduction-strategies>
- The MPI Assist Tool (MAT):
<https://mpi.unescwa.org/>
- Revised Arab MPI:
<https://www.unescwa.org/publications/proposal-revised-multidimensional-poverty-index-arab-countries>
- Global MPI :
<https://ophi.org.uk/multidimensional-poverty-index/>

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