
EGM on the Preparation of the 2nd Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report

Amman Jordan, 27 October 2021

Concept Note

1. Background

The emphasis on multidimensional poverty, or capability poverty, has grown in recent years based on the work of the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen. His *capability approach* suggests that the freedom people must have to achieve certain critical functioning is crucial for poverty measurement and analysis. According to this approach, poverty can be viewed as the inability to enjoy the basic rights and freedoms of life. In deciding the domains or dimensions of multidimensional poverty, several normative decisions must be taken based on contemporary theories and practice. The capability approach has the advantage that it can be tailored to fit the conditions of all countries, rich and poor.

The progress in contextualizing multidimensional poverty has given rise to a variety of approaches. Multidimensional poverty indices (MPI) articulate nonmonetary deprivations across various social dimensions, providing a more accurate depiction of the experience of the poor. An MPI provides a clear picture of where and how people are poor, enabling more efficient allocation of resources, coordinating policies across different social spheres, and targeting sectors and regions that are the most in need of support, in line with the principle of leaving no one behind. Measuring the multiple dimensions of poverty and inequality can help identify policy gaps and re-approach poverty in a more comprehensive way going beyond consumption, income and wealth, and instead stimulate a discussion around the manifestations of poverty and inequality in the Arab region, policies for targeting the main drivers, and evidence-based evaluation of these policies.

The initial Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report was prepared by ESCWA in accordance with a resolution of the League of Arab States (LAS) Ministerial Council for Social Affairs to assess multidimensional poverty in the Arab region. The report aimed to capture the ongoing challenges that the Arab region continues to face. Armed conflict left a heavy humanitarian toll, reflected in the unprecedented waves of refugees and displaced persons within the Arab region and beyond, with over half of the world's refugees originating from the region.

Since the adoption of the initial Arab MPI framework and the publication of the Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report in 2017, ESCWA, LAS and its institutional partners have emphasized the need to introduce a Revised Arab MPI framework in order to account for the more recent changes in regional poverty dynamics, and the recent developments in multidimensional poverty research.

In December 2020, the Revised Arab MPI framework was formally adopted by the LAS Social Ministerial Council. Particular attention has been paid to improving the Arab MPI's inter-country comparability, retaining temporal comparability, and better capturing the manifestations of moderate poverty prevailing in Arab middle-income countries. The main innovation in the revised Arab MPI is its assessment of poverty in both material and social capability spaces, and the allocation of equal weights to both of these pillars. This approach provides a more comprehensive and balanced representation of poverty, particularly as Arab countries have witnessed progress in social wellbeing but less so in material and living-conditions wellbeing.

In light of the formal adoption of the Revised Arab MPI framework, ESCWA has partnered with UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, LAS and OPHI to produce the Second Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report. To this end, ESCWA is organizing an Expert Group Meeting aimed at bringing together a group of experts from fellow UN agencies and external partners to discuss the process of preparation and the structure of the Report.

2. Objectives

The EGM aims to facilitate discussion of the process of preparation and the structure of the upcoming Second Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report. Inputs from the LAS Ministerial Council meeting held on 25/10/2021 (Amman, Jordan) are to be discussed and addressed. The Meeting will be dedicated to a detailed procedural and substantive discussion of the preparation of the four chapters of the Report.

3. Topics

The substantive discussion includes the following items:

- (1) The framework of the revised Arab multidimensional poverty index (MPI) at the household level
- (2) Assessing child poverty using the Multidimensional Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA)
- (3) Investigating poverty trends pre- and post-COVID, and the focus on the least-developed and conflict-affected Arab countries.
- (4) Policy recommendations

Specifically, four 30-minute sessions will be held, dedicated in turn to each of the four chapters:

Session 1: Chapters 1–2 moderated by OPHI, ESCWA and LAS
The multidimensional poverty index analyzed at the household level

Session 2: Chapter 2 moderated by UNICEF
Assessing child poverty using the Multidimensional Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA)

Session 3: Chapter 3 moderated by ESCWA and UNFPA
Investigating poverty trends and a focus on least-developed and conflict-affected Arab countries.

Session 4: Chapter 4 moderated by UNDP and LAS
Policy recommendations

4. Participation and registration

Participants will include experts from partner organizations including: on the UN side, ESCWA, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, joined by partner institutions LAS and OPHI. Registration of participation is by email.

5. Organization, format, venue, and dates

The Expert Group Meeting is held in Amman, Jordan at the Fairmont Hotel, on Wednesday, 27 October 2021, for the duration of one day. The EGM sessions are from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm noon (Amman time).

6. Agenda

October 27th 10:00 am
Opening Notes
Introductory comments by ESCWA (Khalid Abu Ismail) and LAS (Tarek Nabulsi)
Session 1
Chapters 1–2 moderated by OPHI (Corinne Mitchell), ESCWA (Khalid Abu Ismail) and LAS (Manuella Nehme) <i>The multidimensional poverty index analyzed at the household level</i>
Discussion
Session 2
Chapter 2 moderated by UNICEF (Leonardo Menchini) <i>Assessing child poverty using the Multidimensional Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA)</i>
Session 3
Chapter 3 moderated by ESCWA (Khalid Abu Ismail, Vladimir Hlasny) and UNFPA (Manal Selim) <i>Investigating poverty trends and a focus on least-developed and conflict-affected Arab countries</i>
Session 4
Chapter 4 moderated by UNDP (Vito Intini, Fekadu Terefe) and LAS (Tarek Nabulsi) <i>Policy recommendations</i>
Discussion