Measuring Multidimensional Poverty

A Global Assessment of Data Availability and Data Gaps

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Our Motivation

Create a **truly global** **Multidimensional Poverty Index**, that

1. Covers most of the **the world's population** (incl. OECD/UNECE)

2. Is nationally representative and **disaggregated** at subnational level

3. Can be **frequently updated**

4. Covers **key dimensions** of human development (Atkinson report)

Nutrition
Health status
Education

Housing conditions
Access to work
Personal security

Key to achieve SDG 1 and Leave No One Behind pledge

Why is this important?

OPHI and UNDP's **global MPI** launched in 2010

- Internationally comparable measure of **acute poverty**
- Covers 100+ **developing countries**
- Does not cover employment or personal security (data constraints)

13/56 UNECE countries are covered

In 53 countries, less than 10% of the population are MPI poor

MPI is low in urban areas of many higher MPI countries

➔ **Need for higher achievements**

Included in global MPI 2022
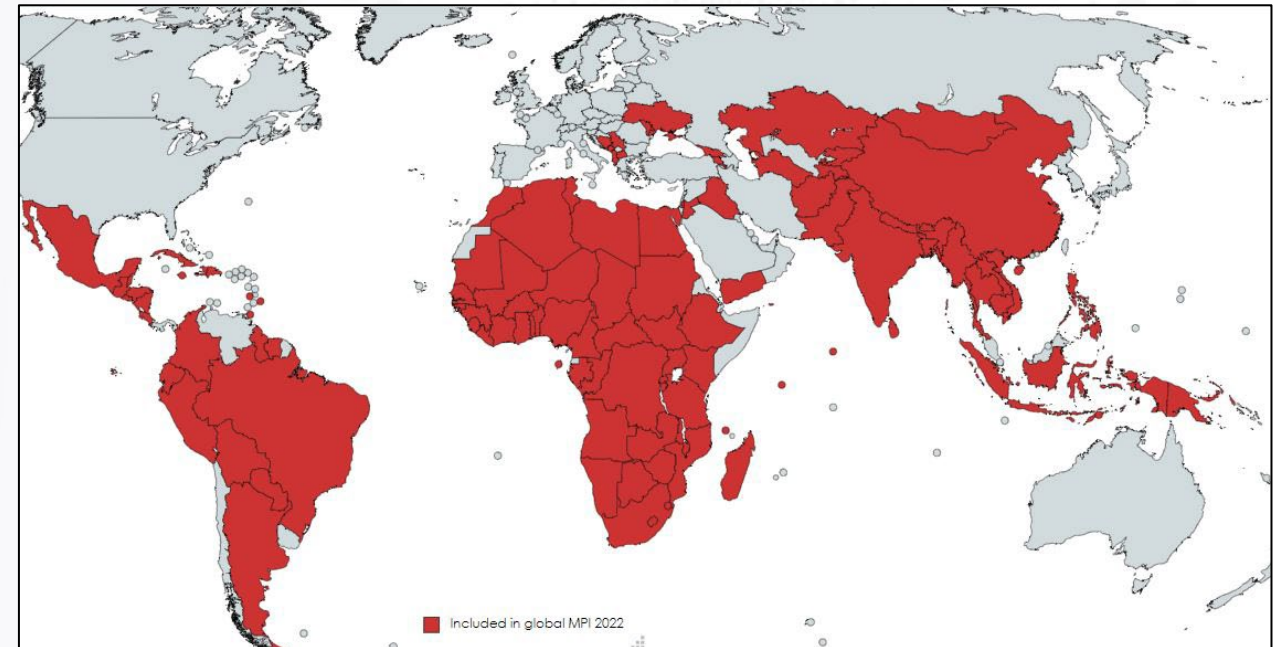
Our Goal: Assess feasibility for a new global measure

MPIs rely on household surveys

But **no single survey covers MPI related modules across the world**

DHS and MICS
    Comparable across countries – but not global
    Updates only every 3-5 years
    No employment module, and mostly focused on acute conditions

National surveys
    Tailored to countries – lack of comparability
    Often difficult to access
    Health data is limited

→ Earlier approaches to extend the global MPI were **data constrained**

Our Approach: detailed review of household surveys

1. Find and review **new surveys**
   - National surveys, especially of populous countries
   - Cross-national surveys
   - Harmonized cross-country datasets

2. Review **existing global MPI surveys** for new questions
   - Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS)
   - Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS)

→Synthesize findings to 'scope' new measures

MPI data requirements and selection criteria

1. Single dataset with data on all indicators
2. Individual or household level
3. Nationally representative and it can be disaggregated
4. Sufficient sample size
5. Regularly collected
6. Includes non-monetary modules

- Demographics
- Education
- Health
- Living conditions
- Durable goods / assets
- Employment
- Finance
- Technology/media

- Subjective wellbeing
- Time use
- Relationships
- Governance
- Environment
- Personal security

Review: three-step process

1. Survey searches and listing

Online searches – microdata libraries, NSO and survey websites, published papers and reports
Expert opinion – NSOs, international organisations, survey providers, academics
Existing knowledge – national MPIs, academic work on MPIs

→ 129 national, 26 cross-national, and 8 harmonised dataset

2. Survey Reviews

Basic checks – sample design and size, frequency, modules, disaggregations

→ 43 national and 10 cross-national surveys assessed
→ Also added surveys used for national MPIs

Review: three-step process

3. Questionnaire Reviews

Focus was on

Advanced economies

20 most populous countries

Surveys that were accessible – language, paywall, NSO restrictions

28 national surveys

25 countries (incl. 15 of the 20 most populous)

Close to 5.2 billion people (72%)

1 cross-national survey

Gallup World Poll: up to 160 countries

2 cross-national harmonised databases

EU-SILC: 27 members + 10 non-member countries (628 million)

SEDLAC: 24 countries (636 million)

+ 128 DHS/MICS
- 104 countries
- 4.2 billion people

OPHI

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Key observations: National household surveys

1. Rich in detail but often not comparable

Differences in question wording and recall periods – e.g. employment

Harmonisation required → labour intense and not always feasible

2. MPI modules not collected simultaneously

Often in different surveys – e.g. health and employment

3. Some have irregular updates

MPIs are used for policy → need frequent updating

4. Accessing questionnaires and data is often difficult

Language barriers

Restricted access by NSOs

Data repositories often out of date

Key observations: Cross-national surveys / datasets

1. Essential for comparability and extensive coverage
> Harmonised variables make comparison more straightforward
> Sometime questions are also carried by other countries

2. Sample design and size can differ between countries
> Can pose limits for disaggregation or trends analysis

3. Harmonised datasets (e.g. EU-SILC, SEDLAC)
> + Makes comparison easy
> – Only a selected set of variables

65 countries and 67 million people are not covered by any of the four cross-country surveys or datasets reviewed (EU-SILC, SEDLAC, Gallup, DHS/MICS)

Key observations – Global indicator coverage

Education

Routinely collected in nearly all surveys

E.g. school attendance, educational attainment

Employment

Routinely collected in most surveys (except DHS and MICS)

But **recall periods differ** – 7 days, 4 weeks, 12 months

Finances

Some questions but little comparability

E.g. material deprivation, income, living costs, debts, assets/durable goods

Living conditions

Few comparable variables

e.g. phone, internet, sanitation, rooms, quality of housing

Health

No single variable is covered by all datasets

E.g. unmet need, limited activities, health insurance, nutrition, food insecurity

Key observations – Global indicator coverage

Difficult to set uniform indicators cutoffs

1. Lack of comparability in question wording and recalls
    e.g. overcrowding – questions on bedrooms / rooms / m2 + cultural variation
    e.g. food insecurity – FIES (12 months), EU material deprivation question

2. Different issues are relevant across contexts
    e.g. basic services are near universal in high-income countries (e.g. electricity, sanitation)
    e.g. health insurance in a key indicator in USA but not relevant in EU

Many key topics are not widely available
    e.g. nutrition, energy source and use, domestic violence

What is possible with existing data?

A truly global MPI with expanded indicator coverage, frequent updates and disaggregation **is still not feasible with existing data.**

Data gaps are evident despite data revolution and increase in coverage
- Health data is scarcely available
- Surveys often operate in silos
- Many are updated at irregular intervals
- Sample size is not always sufficient
- Limited data access
- Difficult to collate information

But **local measures could be possible if comparable data exists**
→ e.g. regional MPIs

What is needed?

Goal is to **use the same surveys for national and comparable MPIs**

Need for
1. **Coordination on core questions** of household surveys
2. **Improved access** to national data

Without this, we cannot compare poverty trends globally!
  Important for SDGs and LNOB
  Motivation to learn from success stories

Remaining questions

1. What other (cross-country) datasets are available or planned?
 e.g. in CIS, in EU
 How to access them – e.g. language, authorisation

2. Is there momentum for a cross-country MPI survey?
 e.g. including MPI modules in existing surveys

3. Innovative methodologies
 Linking surveys (e.g. Canada, Botswana, Colombia)
 Alternative data sources (e.g. administrative data, census)

4. Are phone/internet surveys reliable for a cross-country measure?
 Differences in sampling, response rates, accuracy

Thank you!

Questions, comments and suggestions are welcome

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