

MPI Q&A (asked at MPI online launch event)

Q1. Is 2009 a good comparison year given that we were experiencing a financial crisis during this year?

Ans The data for MPI needs to come from one single data source. The MPI is based on the Demographic Health Survey (DHS) conducted in the country. The first round of DHS was conducted in 2009. The demographic health survey presents the situation of the population from health perspective and does not collect information with regard to economic aspects. For a credible comparison of the MPI over time, we need to construct the same MPI for both years of interest. This can only be done with the same source of data, hence the choice for the DHS 2009 and DHS 2016/17.

Q2. Does the index take into consideration, the real picture of effects and causes? Some people may not fall into the poverty bracket just because they suffer on a completely different dimension: loans from the bank and others with very high interest rates.

Ans The Maldives MPI takes into account as many of the most suitable indicators from the DHS. Clearly, there are many indicators that are not captured by the DHS, which are important for people's lives. These include credit and savings, safety and security, violence, the environment among many other factors.

Q3. With the MPI findings, how are we compared to other South Asian Countries considering the 3 indicators?

Ans The Maldives MPI is a unique stand-alone measure only suitable to track and monitor poverty within the Maldives. No other National MPI is comparable. The only multidimensional measure currently, that compares acute multidimensional poverty across more than 100 countries globally using the same indicator definitions, is the global MPI. Computed by OPHI, University of Oxford and published in the UN's Human Development Reports, Maldives fares very well on that index of 10 indicators spanning health, education, and living standards. In this ranking of 101 countries, Maldives is the 9th least poor country according to the global MPI. The global MPI for Maldives is 0.003 with less than 1% of the Maldives population being multidimensionally poor, the lowest value in South Asia.

Q4. We have a register to enable distributing Zakat, how is that register maintained and what are the criteria to register in it, and how does it differ from MPI? Will MPI data be considered in future to distribute Zakat?

Ans The Zakat register is maintained by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs. Zakat is distributed to those who apply for it. MPI is based on data from the Demographic Health Survey (DHS). The MPI can inform policy which can help government streamline the targeting of poverty alleviation assistance in the country.

Q5. Maldives is being impacted significantly because of the Covid-19 crisis and its structural factors such as its high dependence on tourism. With the Covid-19 pandemic which is still to go for a longer time with knock-on effects, the GDP of Maldives will be significantly contracted. This will increase the income/consumption-based poverty and I am sure it will

have also impact on the multidimensional poverty. Could you please further elaborate on the impact of Covid-19 on multidimensional poverty?

Ans The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the livelihood of many if not everyone in the Maldives. Many MPI indicators will be affected. For example, with schools closed, many children are not able to attend any classes and there is fear that some children might not return to school. Given the huge income losses for many, especially informal workers and those employed in the tourism industry, other indicators of the MPI, such as nutrition and obesity, may get affected in the short and medium term. Therefore, new data are needed to evaluate the immediate impact and changes to the MPI.

Q6. What are the specific reasons / factors that contribute to the multidimensional poverty of the households having a PWD?

Ans For households with Persons with Disability, the factors that contribute to the multidimensional poverty would come from the 8 indicators included in the national MPI. We are working on this breakdown and will be soon available online.

Q7. Does each country decide its own indicators? If so, how were the indicators for Maldives prioritized. If there is option of adding indicators would Maldives consider an indicator on climate change impacts and environment

Ans Yes. For the national MPI each country decides on the indicators that reflect the dimensional poverty in a country. The process is long, as it goes through series of stakeholder consultant, discussion at policy level and endorsement of indicators at cabinet/ head of Government. The Maldives national MPI was endorsed by the President on 4 February after going through all these processes. The current national MPI is based on data available from Demographic Health Survey (DHS). Climate change and other areas are important consideration to include in the next round of DHS.

Q8. How much does our MPI relate to our national ecological deficit?

Ans The current Maldives MPI does not include indicators on the environment due to limited data available on environment indicators in DHS

Q9. When you say children are more likely to experience MPI, what drives them. As you rightly said they do not have agency to decide on access to education or health or even living arrangements? what are the underlying factors? are these kids born unwanted? are parents poor to begin with? please highlight the socio-economic drivers?

Ans The Maldives MPI includes several indicators that measure outcomes in health and education. These include undernutrition (stunting or underweight), obesity and years of schooling. Children are most likely to be multidimensionally poor across all age groups.

Q10. What are the reasonings behind each indicator? especially obesity?

Ans The Maldives MPI attempts to include indicators that capture the multidimensions of poverty and livelihood in the Maldives. Indicators are tailored to the country context as much as possible. In the case of nutrition, earlier research has shown that in the Maldives more and more people are have been suffering from overweight and its related effects on

health, such as diabetes, hypertension etc. Therefore, obesity was considered a crucial indicator to be included in the Maldives MPI.

Q11. Does MPI consider assets like green space available and natural play areas available for children

Ans The Maldives MPI could not include such indicators, as the DHS did not capture these dimensions of quality of life.

Q12. It would be interesting to learn of plans / thoughts on how Government will create a demand for this important index in policy formulation and policies implementation. I assume it would be also very useful not only in policies but also in laws / regulations as well.

This, I ask, not only in the context of Male' but also creating this demand at the atolls and islands levels where decision makers implement policies and feed into making policies and therefore, I am also wondering how this Index will be "marketed" towards the general political fora.

Ans The Government's adoption of the MPI reflects the government commitment to adopt MPI as a policy tool. It further acknowledges the government commitment to address the inequity between Male' and Atolls. MPI is instrumental in resource allocation, monitoring SDG Goals and the National Plans.

Q13. Can you please clarify what you mean by "monetary deprivations" being "under control" in Maldives in the context of the MPI analysis, and how do you think the Covid-19 situation may affect this?

This is considering also the broader national reality of increasing national debt and current economic crisis?

"Central government debt rose to an estimated 61.8 percent of GDP in 2019 from 58.5 percent in 2018" (World Bank)

Ans The MPI is a poverty measure which complements the income poverty measure in the country. The national poverty line of MVR 74 shows that 8% of the population is poor whereas when we use national MPI, 28% of the population falls into multidimensional poverty. The use of both these measures has the advantage of capturing the most vulnerable and vulnerability through different means.

The situation of COVID-19 is likely to result in many falling into poverty. Countries are adopting to use simulation with rapid assessment to estimate the effect on poverty due to this pandemic.

Maldives is working to measure the effect of COVID on poor through Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI)

Q14. % poor in North Central Region is 20.7% whilst rest of the regions are around 50%. Why the difference?

Ans According to MPI, the highest headcount ratios (the percentage of MPI poor) are in Central Region (K, AA, ADh, V) followed by North Region (HA, HDh, Sh). This is mostly contributed deprivation in Living standard indicators.

However, based on the distribution of multidimensionally poor population, more poor people are found in North (21.5%) and South Region (20.9%). The difference is merely in the commutation of these two indicators (one is MPI poor while the other is the share of poor population across region).

Q15. We have seen how foreign workers has affected in COVID 19, will there be changes to regulations to address foreign workers' health and wellbeing considering MPI

Ans MPI is based on Demographic Health Survey (DHS) 2009 and 2016/17. The DHS is a sample survey and represents the resident Maldivian population, only. At this moment, other administrative data can be made use to address the situation of foreign workers in the country.

Q16. Does the MPI consider expatriate workers (foreign/migrant workers). As the unit of identification is a household, are households that are entirely migrant worker (for example) included? or HHs with a live-in migrant worker included?

Ans MPI is based on Demographic Health Survey (DHS) 2009 and 2016/17. The DHS is a sample survey and represents the resident Maldivian population, only.

Q17. With the Covid-19 pandemic, things will not quite be normal, to get to a normal it also would take time. How would you plan to tackle with these challenges? in terms of the future findings of the report? Will there be methodological changes? if so, what are they?

Ans Currently, NBS and OPHI are in process of developing a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index, which is tailored to reflecting the most urgent and COVID-19 related factors using the latest HIES data as soon as it becomes available. In addition, the National MPI reflects several

Q18. May I inquire, whether, during the process of analysing data and measuring this index, wistful attention was given to the different way's girls may be poorer than boys or vice versa?

Ans Thank you. Gender is an important aspect and we hope to have the results of MPI by gender uploaded on our website soon.

Q19. How can these indicators be used to improve the quality of education in the Maldives? Health (obesity) is a huge issue but that the schools do not practice physical education although it is included in the national curriculum? This is also a significant factor considering the households they live in.

Ans The Maldives MPI attempts to include indicators that are capture the multidimensions of poverty and livelihood in the Maldives. Indicators are tailored to the country context as much as possible. And over the past 8 years, while education and information indicators showed improvement, the same cannot be said for health indicators. Improving health is important and physical education is one way of addressing it.

Q20. How well are the minority groups in the Maldives represented in the MPI?

Ans The Maldives MPI is based on DHS data and includes indicators that capture the multidimensions of poverty and livelihood in the Maldives. The results reflect the vulnerability of the poor and the indicators in which they are deprived.

Q21. What is multidimensional poverty index and how is it better than other poverty measuring indices?

Ans MPI is a one statistical figure that provides a composite measure of how households are experiencing poverty. For the purpose of MPI, poverty is defined as deprivation form basic rights and basic services as opposed to using “income” as a one single measure of poverty. In the case of Maldives, the aspects or dimensions of poverty are health, education & information, and household living conditions (access to sewage, water, and over crowdedness).

Q22. Can I ask about child safeguarding, with the impact that poverty can have on child protection are numbers of referalls to social work services or numbers of children entering alternative care tracked in this methodology?

Ans No. This dimension could not be included in this first MPI report due to the lack of information on this dimension. MPI used the DHS as a source of information. DHS does not include the information you mentioned. I hope this issue can be addressed in the future MPI reports

Q23. In the context of the Maldives, and especially in light of the recent pandemic, what policy implications does using a tool such as the MPI have in future planning. How can this tool be used to advise the government on strengthening the resiliency of the country?

Ans The value of the MPI is that it tells the government who and where are the vulnerable people are and who will be suffering from the current situation more than others. For instance, public health officials are asking the public to wash their hands more frequently. Compliance with such a health advise will not be possible or easy to households that do not have water and/or sanitation services.

Q24. Comparing to the global Multidimensional Poverty Index, where does Maldives stand?

Ans Maldives has a very low global MPI - less than 1% of people are poor, compared with 28% in India for example. It has by far the lowest MPI across South Asia.

Q25. Which Multidimensional poverty indicators are most vulnerable to COVID19 pandemic in South East Asia and which one will be least affected?

Ans The Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network (MPPN.org) has a brief but substantive online event showing how countries are using multidimensional techniques to address COVID-19: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POdxu0KcCsk>

Q26. I was looking at one of the bar charts and I wanted to ask the minister particularly, if the strategic action plan that was formulated last year do indeed take that picture into consideration. From what I can see on that graph, the indicators that seem to increase the Atolls MPI are Education, Drinking water and Toilet (water and sanitation basically!). Are strategies already in the plan and if not, would the government revise the plan accordingly National MPI reflects the government commitment to adopt MPI as a policy tool. It further acknowledges the government commitment to address the inequity between Male’ and Atolls. MPI is crucial in future resource allocation, monitoring SDG Goals and the National Plans.

