

1. INTRODUCING THE INDIVIDUAL DEPRIVATION MEASURE



Why do we need a new poverty measure?

What we measure matters, especially when tackling poverty and gender inequality. Poverty measures are used to advocate for scarce resources, to allocate those resources, to evaluate the impact of policies, projects, programs and institutional designs, and to analyse the determinants of poverty. Gender equity measures similarly assess, evaluate and inform. However, the inadequacies of current measures limit our effectiveness.

Most poverty measurement does not reflect the perspectives of poor people who have the most direct knowledge of poverty.

Instead, current measures assess the deprivations that policy makers and experts consider most significant or feasible to measure. They define and measure poverty as though it were the same thing for women and men and fail to consider aspects of life that are specifically important to women or to men. They also categorise people as either 'poor' or 'not poor', masking the depth of poverty.

The World Bank's International Poverty Line and most national poverty lines use income or consumption to assess poverty. This implies that money in the hands of individuals is all that is needed to be not poor. They take account of the costs of all goods and services, including things the poor never buy. They also rely on household-level data, assuming everyone in the household is equally poor. Available multidimensional measures such as the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) consider more than money (e.g. health, education) but remain flawed as they, too, measure the poverty of households. No existing measure assesses the situations of individuals. This makes it impossible to identify exactly who is poor, to what extent and in what ways—and to ensure that 'no one is left behind'.

Measuring at the household level means current measures are blind to how things like food, decision-making and access to resources are distributed among household members, despite wide recognition that inequality exists within households.

This makes it impossible to know, for example, whether women are disproportionately poor or female-headed households are poorer than others.

Combining current gender equity measures with existing poverty measures doesn't help address these limitations. A focus on indicators such as representation in parliament and gender wage differences in formal employment is more relevant to the better off, and ignores many areas of life important to poor women and men.

Introducing the Individual Deprivation Measure

Researchers¹ determined to address these limitations worked with women and men living in poverty to identify how poverty should be conceived and measured.

Research in 18 sites across six countries (Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Fiji, Indonesia and the Philippines) informed development of the Individual Deprivation Measure (IDM) (see IDM brief #2). The IDM measures sufficiency of an individual's core material needs (food, access to water, shelter), access to and quality of core services such as health and education, and their level of control over their own life (decision-making, contraception, freedom from violence).

A survey of each adult in the household assesses 15 areas of life (see overleaf). One adult also completes a brief household survey. Responses are scored on a one to five scale, and weighting is used to prioritise more severe deprivation and more important dimensions (as ranked by poor women and men). These scores are combined into an overall deprivation score, which is expressed as a percentage - the IDM score. This score places an individual in one of five categories: extremely deprived, very deprived, deprived, somewhat deprived or not deprived.



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How is the IDM different?

The IDM is the first poverty measure to be based on how poor women and men define poverty.

Researchers worked with thousands of poor women and men to identify the 15 most important deprivations for defining and measuring poverty that need to be addressed to live adequately. The IDM incorporates previously ignored areas that are especially important for poor women, such as decision making, access to contraception, freedom from violence, and labour burden. It recognises that deprivations in voice, control, agency and governance help perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

The IDM assesses the situation of individuals not households. By surveying every adult in a household, the IDM can reveal differences in deprivation within a household, including by sex, age, disability, ethnicity and self-identified minority status. By measuring poverty on a one to five scale, the IDM identifies not only who is deprived but also the nature and severity of their deprivation.

Making visible who is poor, in what ways and to what extent will improve understanding of the factors that shape poverty, including the influence of gender on men and women's circumstances and opportunities. It makes it possible to target resources to those who are most deprived, and to align responses with needs. Further, by assessing multidimensional deprivation and financial deprivation, but separately², the IDM enables policy makers to track when multidimensional deprivation is related to financial deprivation and when it is not.

The IDM is practical, feasible and cost-effective. Data is captured through an, easy to administer survey

that quickly generates gender-sensitive, multidimensional poverty assessments. People who do not require any special equipment or expertise can conduct the individual survey in roughly an hour. Many of the questions are already used in existing surveys.

The IDM can identify differences between men and women in overall deprivation and within each of the 15 component dimensions. This enables a second measurement innovation: construction of a gender equity measure relevant to the circumstances of poor people.

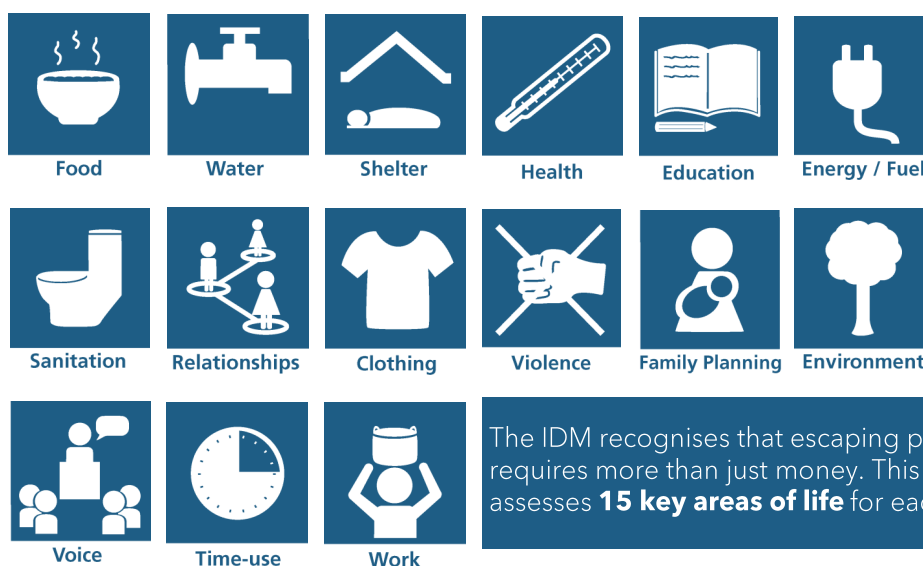
The IDM transforms how poverty is measured. Its ability to effectively assess whether, and to what extent, efforts to address gender disparity and poverty are changing lives is particularly relevant as the global community considers what to measure to assess 'progress' post-2015.

Want more information?

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² This follows the Mexican multidimensional poverty measure that recognises that financial deprivation is an important component of poverty, independent of its relationship to multidimensional deprivation.



The IDM recognises that escaping poverty requires more than just money. This is why it assesses **15 key areas of life** for each individual.

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