

Multidimensional poverty in Voluntary National Reviews 2016–2025

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PURPOSE OF THIS BRIEFING

Each year at the UN's High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), Member States are given the opportunity to report their progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by submitting Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). Given that SDG Goal 1 aims to reduce poverty 'in all its forms', countries are encouraged to report multidimensional poverty statistics alongside monetary statistics when reporting towards this goal. SDG Target 1.2 calls for UN Member States by 2030 to 'reduce by at least half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions'.

Multidimensional poverty has been reported in the VNRs since they began in 2016. Between 2016 and 2025, 190 countries and the European Union have presented VNRs

at HLPF. As 152 of these countries have presented twice or more, there have been 406 VNRs since 2016. Overall, 136 of these VNRs either reported measuring multidimensional poverty or mentioned aspirations to measure multidimensional poverty. The number of countries reporting on multidimensional poverty each year has increased since 2016, when 3 of the 22 VNRs reported multidimensional poverty results or aspirations. By 2023, 16 of the 39 VNRs were reporting on multidimensional poverty, rising to 20 of the 36 VNRs reporting multidimensional poverty in 2024, and 19 of the 35 VNRs in 2025.

Multidimensional Poverty Indices (MPIs) are multidimensional poverty measures which highlight the overlapping deprivations faced by poor people. They provide policymakers with information on who is poor, how they



are poor, and how intensely they suffer poverty. They are key tools for tracking progress towards SDG Target 1.2 through SDG Indicator 1.2.2, the only SDG indicator for which national governments are the custodian agencies. This policy brief explores how MPIs were reported in the 2025 VNRs, and how both MPIs and multidimensional poverty more generally have been reported in the VNRs since 2016.¹

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INSIGHTS FROM THE 2025 VNRs

In 2025, nineteen countries reported on multidimensional poverty, of which eleven countries reported MPI findings.² Some VNRs used their MPI data to share encouraging success stories of their journeys tackling multidimensional poverty. El Salvador reported a ‘sustained decline’ in multidimensional poverty from 39.4% in 2015 to 30.59% in 2021 and 27.8% in 2023. They commented that this improvement was ‘primarily attributed to progress in citizen security, as well as increased access to education and basic services’.³ India reported ‘135 million people escaping multidimensional poverty’ between 2015–16 and 2019–21, across all 12 MPI indicators. They outlined a range of policies implemented to tackle multidimensional poverty, including *PM Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)* which provides clean cooking fuel to rural women, the school feeding programme *PM POSHAN*, and sanitation, water and electricity initiatives.⁴ El Salvador and India are both countries which have also reported MPI data in previous VNRs, allowing them to demonstrate their progress over the years towards achieving SDG Target 1.2.

Some of the 2025 VNRs used MPI data to highlight the groups in the country most in need of poverty interventions. Eswatini reported the subnational region, Shiselweni, with the highest multidimensional poverty rate, and confirmed that ‘rural areas have the highest incidence of multidimensional poverty’ compared with urban areas. Furthermore, they reported that the highest proportion of the population was deprived in cooking fuel (67.4 percent) and the lowest proportion in school attendance (0.3 percent).⁵ Nigeria reported that their 2022 MPI analysis had revealed that ‘regional disparities persist, with 65% of the poor living in the North and 35% (nearly 47 million) in the South’, as well as showing the variation of poverty between states, which ranges from 27% of people living

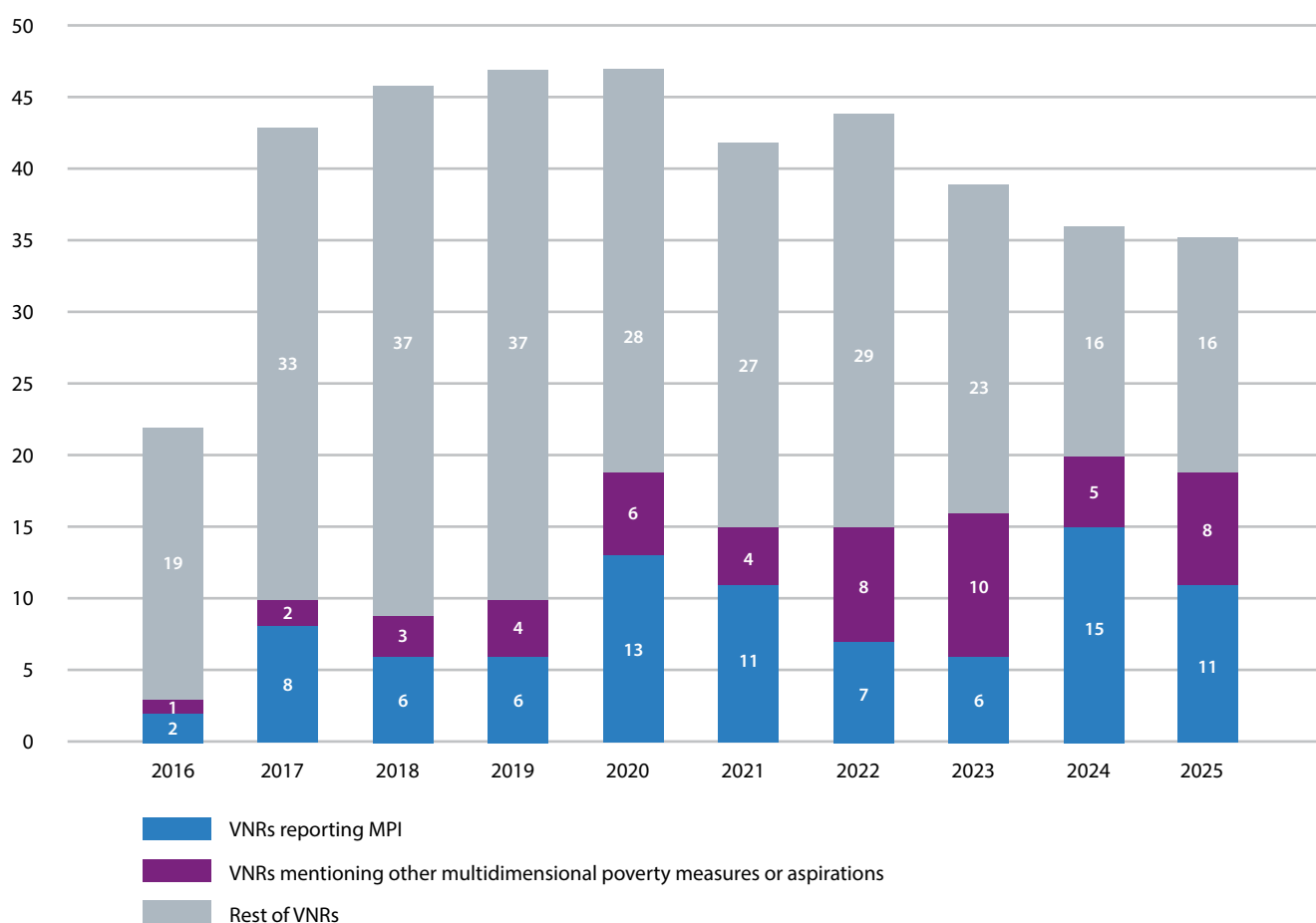
in poverty in Ondo to 91% of people living in poverty in Sokoto state. Nigeria also highlighted how nationally, 67.5% of children and adolescents aged 0–17 are poor compared with 58.7% of adults aged 18 and above.⁶

Since the purpose of poverty data is to lead to action in tackling poverty, countries are encouraged to report policies they have implemented to reduce multidimensional poverty based on MPI data. In their 2025 VNR, for example, Papua New Guinea reported that in order to ‘address multidimensional poverty holistically’, they had implemented the ‘Child Nutrition and Social Protection Project’ which combines ‘cash transfers, health and WASH interventions, and a national social protection framework’.⁷ Malaysia noted that ‘a stronger emphasis on multidimensional poverty data is enabling Malaysia to design more effective, inclusive interventions’, since ‘policymakers are better equipped to respond to the complex realities faced by vulnerable groups.’ They cited the Preschool Food Aid (BMP) as an example of an initiative which provides nutritious meals for children aged four to six in public preschools and addresses multidimensional poverty. Malaysia also noted that they are developing *Pangkalan Data Utama (PADU)*, a centralised repository of individual- and household-level data to develop ‘a more holistic understanding of socioeconomic realities across different demographics’ to guide government interventions.⁸

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY IN THE VNRs SINCE 2016: TYPES OF REPORTING

Of the 136 VNRs which have reported on multidimensional poverty since 2016, 86 VNRs have reported data from national, Global, or other MPIs. Context-specific national MPIs, developed and implemented by national governments, are the most frequently reported multidimensional poverty measure. They are reported in 64 VNRs.⁹ Twenty-one VNRs discuss their Global MPI data, an internationally comparable MPI published annually by OPHI and UNDP.¹⁰ One VNR reports a Regional MPI, which measures multidimensional poverty across a selection of countries.¹¹ Eighteen VNRs report a child-specific multidimensional poverty measure: six VNRs use Child MPIs,¹² and a further 12 report UNICEF’s Multiple Overlapping Deprivations Analysis (MODA), which uses a particular adaptation of the MPI methodology for groups of children (not included in our MPI totals). Figure 1 shows the annual breakdown of the number of

Figure 1. Multidimensional poverty in the VNRs 2016–2025



Source: Author's calculations

countries reporting MPI and other multidimensional poverty measures or aspirations in their VNRs.

WHAT DATA DO COUNTRIES INCLUDE WHEN REPORTING MPI IN VNRs?

Most VNRs report the percentage of the population who are multidimensionally poor, but additional MPI statistics can also help to illuminate different aspects of multidimensional poverty. The intensity of poverty, which describes the average percentage of weighted deprivations faced by poor people, is reported in 14 VNRs.¹³ Eight VNRs report the percentage of the population who are vulnerable to falling into multidimensional poverty,¹⁴ six report the relative contribution of each weighted poverty indicator to the overall MPI,¹⁵ and four report the percentage of people living below a second, more 'severe' or 'extreme' multidimensional poverty threshold.¹⁶

Disaggregated MPI results provide a deeper understanding of how poverty affects different groups. MPI results are most frequently disaggregated in VNRs by:

- Urban/rural areas: 38 VNRs,¹⁷
- Subnational regions: 23 VNRs,¹⁸
- Child/adult (not counting child-specific measures): 25 VNRs,¹⁹
- Gender: 17 VNRs,²⁰
- Age (non-child-specific): 6 VNRs,²¹
- Indigenous/non-indigenous populations: 4 VNRs,²²
- Race or ethnicity: 3 VNRs,²³
- Other disaggregated results: 3 VNRs [Immigration status (Chile 2017); scheduled castes (India 2020); employment status and household size (Seychelles 2020)].

When countries report additional analysis and disaggregation of MPI results in their VNRs, they highlight the most vulnerable groups in their population, aligning with the core SDG principle of ‘leave no one behind’.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Multidimensional poverty data are increasingly reported in VNRs, particularly national MPI data. However, not all countries with national MPIs report this data in their VNRs. National MPIs are key tools for measuring progress towards SDG target 1.2, reducing poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions, and should be reported in VNRs where available. The Global MPI, which covers most countries in developing regions, can be used by countries without national MPI data to provide a multidimensional perspective on poverty.

One of the advantages of MPIs is that they go beyond national aggregates and averages. When reporting MPI data in VNRs, countries can report more than just country-level headline statistics. Disaggregated results can illuminate subnational inequalities and track progress on poverty reduction for different groups. Analysing MPI data to identify the most vulnerable groups follows the core SDG principle of ‘leave no one behind’. Whenever possible, OPHI therefore also recommends reporting how multidimensional poverty has changed over the years, showing the line of travel towards the goal of SDG Target 1.2. Furthermore, OPHI encourages countries to report how MPI data are being put into action, sharing policies which have been implemented to reduce multidimensional poverty, highlighting success stories as they work towards SDG 1: ‘No Poverty’.

For more information on MPI in VNRs, please visit the [OPHI website](https://ophi.org.uk/).



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ENDNOTES

- 1 Thank you to Maya Evans, Jakob Dirksen, and Azul Fourcade for their contributions to this policy brief.
- 2 2025 VNRs reporting MPI data: Angola, El Salvador, Eswatini, Ghana, India, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, Suriname, Thailand.
- 3 Translated from Spanish, pp. 12–13, CND (2025).
- 4 p. 43, NITI Aayog (2025).
- 5 p. 31, MEPD (2025).
- 6 p. XVII, OSSAP-SDGs (2025).
- 7 p. 49, DNPM (2025).
- 8 pp. 46, 59, MoE (2025).
- 9 Countries reporting national MPIs: Angola 2021, 2025; Armenia 2020, 2024; Belize 2024; Bhutan 2018, 2021; Brazil 2024; Chad 2024; Chile 2017, 2019, 2023; Colombia 2016, 2018, 2021, 2024; Costa Rica 2017, 2020, 2024; Djibouti 2022; Ecuador 2018, 2020; El Salvador 2017, 2022, 2025; Eswatini 2025; Ghana 2022, 2025; Guatemala 2019; India 2025; Kyrgyzstan 2025; Madagascar 2021; Malaysia 2021; Maldives 2023; Mauritania 2024; Mexico 2021, 2024; Morocco 2020; Namibia 2024; Nepal 2020, 2024; Nigeria 2020, 2025; Panama 2017, 2020; Rwanda 2019, 2023; Seychelles 2020, 2025; Sierra Leone 2019, 2021, 2024; Sri Lanka 2018, 2022; South Sudan 2024; Suriname 2025; Thailand 2021; Timor-Leste 2023; Uganda 2024; Vietnam 2018, 2023; Yemen 2024; Zambia 2020.
- 10 Countries reporting Global MPI: Barbados 2023; Chad 2019, 2021; Cuba 2021; Democratic Republic of Congo 2020; Egypt 2016; Eswatini 2022; Guatemala 2017; Guinea-Bissau 2022; India 2020; Kenya 2020; Lao People's Democratic Republic 2021; Liberia 2020, 2022; Mongolia 2019; Nepal 2017; Papua New Guinea 2025; Republic of the Congo 2024; South Sudan 2024; Tajikistan 2017; Zimbabwe 2017.
- 11 Dominican Republic, 2018.
- 12 Bhutan 2018, Panama 2020, Sierra Leone 2019 and 2021, Viet Nam 2023, Thailand 2025.



- 13 Reporting intensity: Belize 2024; Chad 2021; Djibouti 2022; Eswatini 2022; Guatemala 2019; Guinea-Bissau 2022; Madagascar 2021; Nepal 2017; Panama 2017, 2020; Seychelles 2020; Suriname 2025; Thailand 2021; Zimbabwe 2017.
- 14 Reporting vulnerability: Barbados 2023, Chad 2021, Cuba 2021, Eswatini 2022, Guinea-Bissau 2022, Liberia 2022, Papua New Guinea 2025, Tajikistan 2017.
- 15 Reporting indicator contribution: Chile 2017; Eswatini 2025; Panama 2017, 2020; Seychelles 2020; Zambia 2020.
- 16 Reporting severity: Chad 2024; Djibouti 2022; Eswatini 2025; Liberia 2022.
- 17 Urban/rural disaggregation: Angola 2021, 2025; Armenia 2020; Belize 2024; Bhutan 2018, 2021; Brazil 2024; Chad 2019, 2024; Chile 2017; Colombia 2016; Cuba 2021; Djibouti 2022; Dominican Republic 2018; Ecuador 2018, 2020, 2024; El Salvador 2017, 2022; Eswatini 2025; Ghana 2025; Guatemala 2017, 2019; Guinea-Bissau 2022, India 2020, 2025; Kenya 2020, Malaysia 2021; Morocco 2020; Namibia 2024; Nigeria 2020; Panama 2020; Sierra Leone 2021; Timor-Leste 2023; Uganda 2024; Vietnam 2018, 2023; Zambia 2020.
- 18 Regional disaggregation: Angola 2021; Brazil 2024; Chile 2017; Colombia 2016, 2018; Dominican Republic 2018; El Salvador 2022; Eswatini 2025; Ghana 2025; Guatemala 2017; Guinea-Bissau 2022; India 2025; Maldives 2023; Mexico 2021; Morocco 2020; Nigeria 2020, 2025; Panama 2020; Sri Lanka 2022; Timor-Leste 2023; Vietnam 2018, 2023; Zambia 2020.
- 19 Child-specific disaggregation: Angola 2021, 2025; Armenia 2020, 2024; Bhutan 2018, 2021; Chile 2017; Colombia 2016; Dominican Republic 2018; Eswatini 2025; Ghana 2022; Guinea-Bissau 2022; Lao People's Democratic Republic 2021; Liberia 2020; Mexico 2021; Namibia 2024; Nigeria 2025; Panama 2020; Rwanda 2023; Sierra Leone 2019, 2021; Sri Lanka 2022; Thailand 2025; Timor-Leste 2023; Vietnam 2023.
- 20 Gender disaggregation: Angola 2021; Armenia 2024; Brazil 2024; Chile 2017; Colombia 2016; Costa Rica 2017; Dominican Republic 2018; Ecuador 2024; Ghana 2022, 2025; Guinea-Bissau 2022; Mexico 2021; Namibia 2024; Panama 2020; Sierra Leone 2019; Sri Lanka 2018; Vietnam 2023.
- 21 Other age disaggregation: Angola 2021, 2025; Chile 2017; Mexico 2021; Namibia 2024; Sri Lanka 2022.
- 22 Indigenous/non-indigenous disaggregation: Chile 2017; Ecuador 2018; Guatemala 2017; Panama 2020.
- 23 Race/ethnicity disaggregation: Brazil 2024; Vietnam 2018, 2023.

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