



PRESS RELEASE

Pilot project in Honduras strengthens transparency in fight against COVID-19 vulnerability

COVID-19 poses a severe threat to the health and livelihoods of the world's poorest. Honduras has launched a pioneering measure to provide support to the most vulnerable using an innovative and robust statistical methodology.

Oxford, 15 October 2020 –The Government of Honduras has launched a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) to provide electronic vouchers for food, medicines and biosafety equipment targeted to independent workers and self-employed persons hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The MVI measures who is most vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19 according to a number of overlapping variables, including the risk the virus poses to their health, and the financial consequences of pandemic measures adopted by the government on their households. It is one of the first tools of its kind in the world to identify individuals eligible for receiving support using a multidimensional approach.

Developed in Honduras, in partnership with the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), based in the University of Oxford, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the MVI offers a new and technically robust methodology to increase transparency in social protection programming, ensuring that the vouchers reach the people who need them most.

The President of Honduras, Juan-Orlando Hernández, said that the Single Voucher based on the MVI measure “represents a milestone. It will bring much more social benefit and inclusion to the different population sectors. A rigorous work, with high standards of transparency, is being made throughout the process in collaboration with UNDP. This is the money of the Honduran people directed in favour of those most affected by the pandemic. It represents an opportunity for the Government to fulfil its promise of social justice”.

The MVI works by identifying the most vulnerable individuals in one of the following categories: self-employed, unemployed, employed without social security and employer without social security. Using the Alkire-Foster method, developed in Oxford, the MVI highlights individuals facing multiple vulnerabilities to COVID-19 across 15 indicators categorised under four dimensions. If an individual is vulnerable according to 35% or more of these indicators, they are considered eligible for the voucher.

The first dimension – belonging to a high-risk population – aims to capture households with the highest risk of getting infected by COVID-19. The second dimension – health, food security and household characteristics – aims to capture individuals who are living in precarious conditions or have faced food insecurity. The third dimension – economic resilience – aims to capture

households' ability to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 by liquidating their assets or having access to financial services. Finally, the fourth dimension of employment aims to capture individual vulnerability to the financial shock, with indicators relating to the type of employment they have, the sector they work in, and their access to social security. In most cases, the indicators relating to employment contributed the most to the MVI.

The structure of the measure is the product of multiple consultations with national institutions and international organisations. Nine different structures were analysed and their results compared, before the final structure of the measure was confirmed. The MVI is, therefore, robust to changes in the structure, weights, and vulnerability cut-offs.

The MVI is computed using data from the National Register of Participants (*Registro Unico de Participantes*, RUP), which covers 1.5 million households, and represents 40% of the poorest population in Honduras. In addition, a bespoke online questionnaire was created for self-registration and additional registrations were made through a range of unions and different religious institutions.

In the next three months, 260,000 people will receive a single electronic voucher redeemable in selected establishments around the country for food, medicines and biosafety equipment. The first round of identified beneficiaries will receive the e-voucher in October.

Sabina Alkire, Director of the OPHI said of the measure:

“The Multidimensional Vulnerability Index is an innovative and technically robust tool that offers the Honduran government a groundbreaking way of interpreting their data accurately and fairly to reach the most vulnerable first. This is one of the first times anywhere in the world that individuals will be selected for COVID-related support on the basis of an assessment of their vulnerability to COVID-19 in multidimensional terms. It builds on a vital understanding of poverty and vulnerability measured through the overlapping deprivations people face in their daily lives such as in their health, employment, economic resilience and living standards. It shows how governments, in the midst of a great crisis can innovate to turn a corner on poverty and introduce new methodologies that provide an opportunity to reach the most vulnerable first”.

Luis-Felipe López-Calva, UNDP Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean added:

“COVID-19 has deepened the inequalities in the region, and years of social advancement might be lost. By creating and using robust methodologies, UNDP is helping the government of Honduras reach vulnerable populations most affected by the pandemic using a transparent and rigorous selection process. With the development and use of this innovative targeting mechanism, the Government of Honduras sets itself at the forefront of social protection programmes and demonstrates a commitment to reach the vulnerable based on solid evidence”.

[For more information \(in Spanish\) – UNDP website](#)

Media contacts

Cristina Sevillano / cristina.sevillano@undp.org / +504 94 41 33 74

Ana Maria Currea / ana.maria.currea@unpd.org / +202 309 4981

Maya Evans / maya.evans@qeh.ox.ac.uk / +44 751 502 8985

UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality, and climate change. Working with our broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, we help nations to build integrated, lasting solutions for people and planet.

Learn more at undp.org or follow at [@UNDP](https://twitter.com/UNDP).

The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) is an economic research and policy centre within the Oxford Department of International Development at the University of Oxford. OPHI aims to build and advance a more systematic methodological and economic framework for reducing multidimensional poverty, grounded in people's experiences and values

Learn more at ophi.org.uk or follow at [@ophi_oxford](https://twitter.com/ophi_oxford).