



PRESS RELEASE

Multidimensional Poverty Index to Complement Monetary Poverty Measurement in Belize

Belize City, Belize - March 8, 2023 – The Statistical Institute of Belize today presented its findings on the country's first Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) study. This study, conducted as a part of the September 2021 Labour Force Survey, was carried out with technical and financial support from the United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, and the Caribbean Development Bank.

While poverty has been traditionally measured in monetary terms, it has become increasingly recognized that this method alone is insufficient to capture the wide range of deprivations that characterize the experience of poverty and the various ways in which it is manifested. The MPI is a complementary measure to monetary poverty, measuring poverty as an accumulation of concurrent deprivations across various dimensions of well-being, including Health, Education, Employment, and Living Standards. Within these four dimensions, a total of 17 indicators are used to measure deprivation. These indicators were selected in consultation with a cross-section of stakeholders who participated in an MPI Steering Committee.

Data from the MPI study provides an indication of both the incidence (what percent of the population is multidimensionally poor) and the intensity (what percent of the 17 indicators poor households were deprived in) of multidimensional poverty. The product of these two percentages is the national Multidimensional Poverty Index.

The results of the September 2021 MPI study revealed that 35.7 percent of the population in Belize lived in households that were multidimensionally poor. On average, these households were found to be deprived in 39 percent of the 17 indicators measured. The national MPI for September 2021 was 0.139.

Across the districts, the highest levels of multidimensional poverty were seen in the Toledo district, while the Belize district had the lowest. Persons living in rural communities were more likely to be multidimensionally poor than those in urban areas, with the incidence of multidimensional poverty in rural communities being double that of urban ones. Additionally, the country's younger population, larger households, households with children, households with a head who was either unemployed or underemployed, and households with a head who had completed only up to a primary level of education or none at all were more likely to be multidimensionally poor. Higher levels of multidimensional poverty were also seen among male-headed households than among households headed by females.

The data for measuring multidimensional poverty in Belize will be collected each year as part of the September round of the Labour Force Survey and these estimates will be compiled annually, providing valuable data to measure multidimensional poverty in Belize and to monitor the country's progress in reducing poverty over time. This data will also help to provide a more comprehensive understanding of poverty in Belize, enabling policymakers to design more targeted and effective poverty reduction strategies.

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