MALAWI MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX
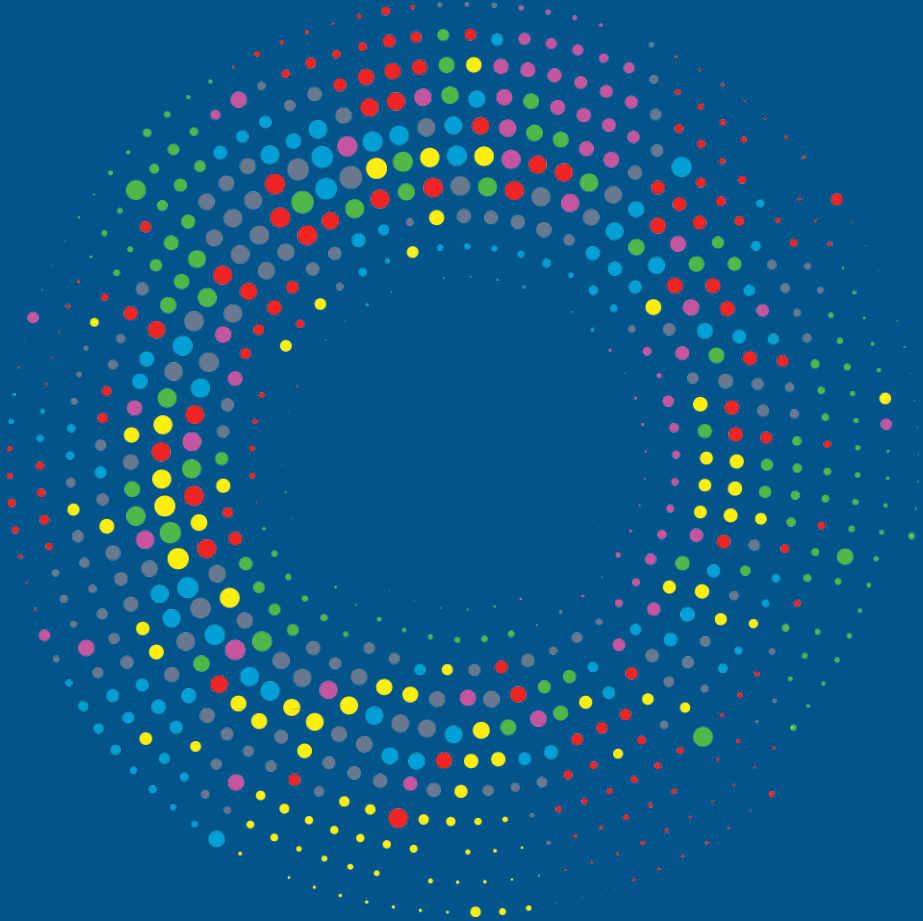
The Malawi Government has adopted the Malawi National Multidimensional Poverty Index (M-MPI) as an official measure of multidimensional poverty, complementing existing monetary measures of poverty. The M-MPI aims at identifying key simultaneous disadvantages that affect multidimensionally poor people, providing important information for monitoring the progress towards Malawi 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The M-MPI is computed using data from the Integrated Household Survey (IHS). The first official release of the Index uses data from the 2016/17 IHS4. The M-MPI report provides a detailed analysis by region, district, place of residence, sex of household head, and age group, which identifies the poorest groups and specific areas of deprivation to ensure effective prioritization and inclusion of all disadvantaged people. This underpins the pledge in the Preamble to the SDGs that "no one will be left behind" and the desire expressed in Malawi 2063 to "not leave behind those segments of the society that are vulnerable and marginalized".

The M-MPI has four dimensions: i) Health and Population, ii) Education, iii) Environment and iv) Work; and thirteen indicators as indicated in Figure 1. Each dimension, as well as the indicators within these dimensions, have been assigned equal weights.
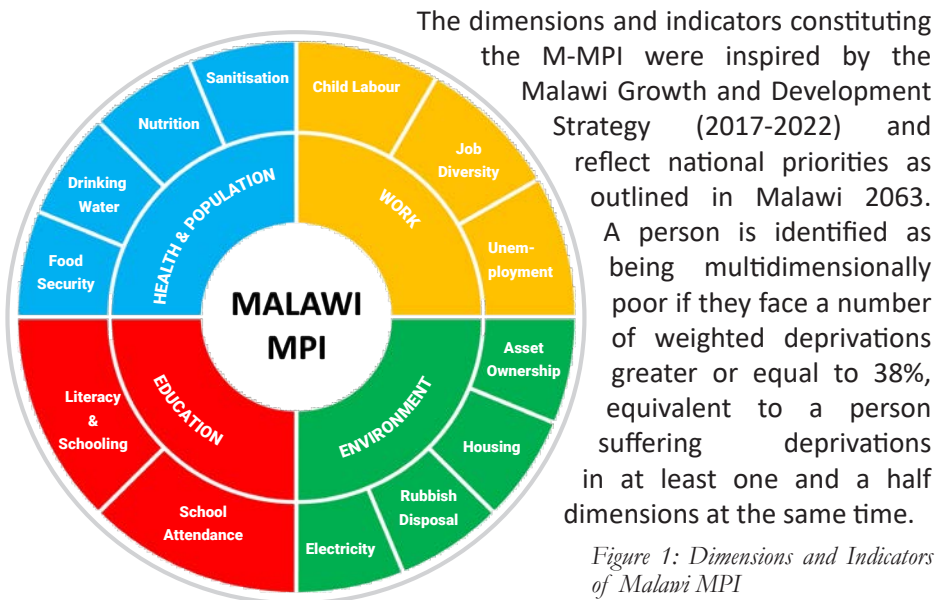

The dimensions and indicators constituting the M-MPI were inspired by the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (2017-2022) and reflect national priorities as outlined in Malawi 2063. A person is identified as being multidimensionally poor if they face a number of weighted deprivations greater or equal to 38%, equivalent to a person suffering deprivations in at least one and a half dimensions at the same time.

Figure 1: Dimensions and Indicators of Malawi MPI

Selected Results

According to the M-MPI, approximately six out of every ten (61.7%) people in Malawi live in multidimensional poverty – this is the **incidence** of multidimensional poverty in the country. On average, a multidimensionally poor person suffers simultaneous deprivations in 54.6% of the weighted indicators considered in the M-MPI – this is the **intensity** of multidimensional poverty. Combining both the incidence and the intensity of multidimensional poverty, the value of the M-MPI is 0.337. As an index, the M-MPI can range from 0, when no person is deprived in any indicator, to 1, when everyone is deprived in all indicators.

The deprivations that contribute the most to this level of poverty nationally are related to literacy and schooling (14.9%), access to electricity (11.4%), job diversity (11.3%), and asset ownership (10.2%) as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Contribution of the Indicators to Multidimensional Poverty

Dimension	Indicator	Contribution (%)
Health and Population	Sanitation	6.5
	Nutrition	2.8
	Drinking Water	5.1
	Food Security	8.3
Education	Literacy and schooling	14.9
	School attendance	5.1
Environment	Electricity	11.4
	Rubbish disposal	6.1
	Housing	8.2
	Asset ownership	10.2
Work	Unemployment	1.4
	Job diversity	11.3
	Child Labour	8.4

A further analysis of the M-MPI values for each district highlights the important within-country inequalities. The district-level M-MPI ranges from 0.457 in Machinga to 0.059 in Mzuzu City as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: M-MPI by District
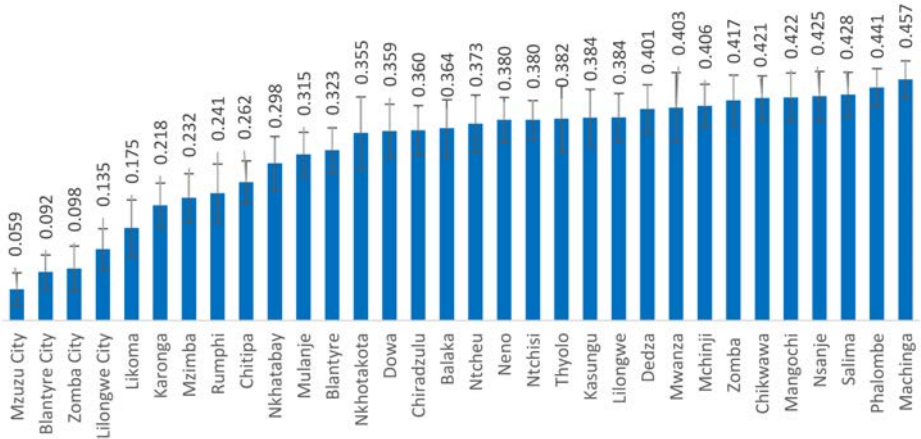
Policy Implications and the Way Forward

The report highlights the variation in the proportion of multidimensionally poor people across geographic areas and different population sub-groups. It also identifies the pertinent indicators that contribute to the different levels of poverty in different areas among the various groups. It should therefore be used as the basis for further analysis and discussion in designing policies and programmes that will target and reduce multidimensional poverty to improve the lives of those in need.

Findings from this report will help to monitor social progress made with regards to the Malawi 2063 and target 1.2 of the SDGs, which aims to reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions.

This report will be revised using data from the IHS5 survey, conducted in 2019/20. The second report will provide detailed changes in the levels and composition of multidimensional poverty from 2016/17 to 2019/20.