

Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) – Case Studies from the Ground



Issa – Far North Region, Cameroon



67-year-old Issa, Guidiguiss

Sixty-seven-year-old Issa lives with his wife and seven children in the Far North Region of Cameroon. Issa has lived in Guidiguiss for 42 years, having moved here from a town about 40 miles away. Twelve years ago, Issa was injured while working at his job as a mason. His hip was dislocated, and he lacked the resources to receive appropriate treatment at the hospital. Issa, like everyone else in the locality, does not have health insurance.

Since that day 12 years ago, Issa's and his family's lives have grown more difficult. He can no longer work regularly as a construction labourer, nor can he farm millet and other cereals as he did prior to his injury. These days Issa ekes out a living for his family by teaching local children the Koran for which he receives donations and support from the community.

Issa's family has suffered the loss of two children under the age of five. His surviving children live with their father and mother in a small compound of conical huts with thatched roofs and earthen floors. Some have walls of unfired mud brick, while others have only fabric to keep out the elements. They share this space with chickens and other fowl. Cooking fuel – wood, dung, crop waste, and charcoal – is not always available, and cooking is therefore irregular.



Huts in the family's compound

Although some of Issa's children attend school, others remain at home in order to work. The young boy and girl pictured here are making doughnuts that they will then take to sell.



Family members prepare food

Issa's home has no flooring, no electricity, no toilet of any sort, and lacks any of the household assets listed in the MPI survey (radio, bicycle, mobile phone, etc.). Issa's neighbours also lack toilets and use the bush to relieve themselves, and as their living space is shared with farm animals, sanitation is very poor. However, they do have access to a public tap, which is a three-minute walk away.

A typical day finds Issa outside his hut, surrounded by jars of ink and brushes, along with several broad wooden paddles on which his students write their lessons in delicate Koranic Arabic script. He offers instruction three times each day: morning, noon, and evening. He says he is deeply content to be making a valuable contribution to his community in this way.

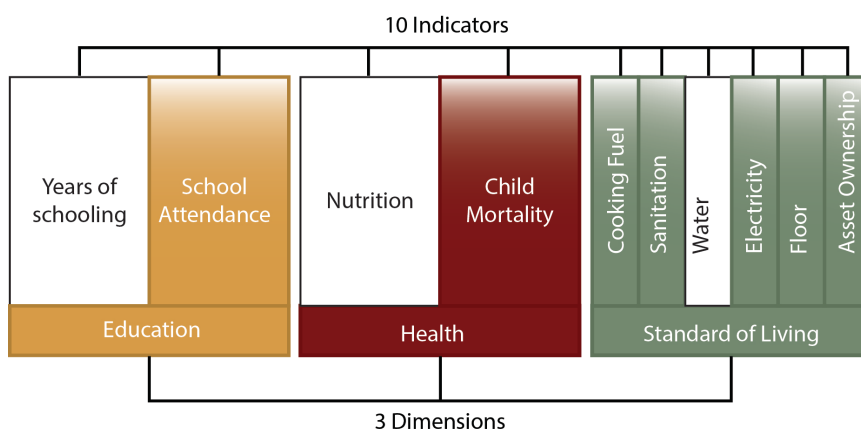


Issa with ink, brushes and wooden paddles

Issa spends the rest of his day visiting family and the rest of the community. He is especially fulfilled when his students succeed by studying further and getting a job, and takes pride in his former students, who always visit him if they come back, and treat him with honour and respect.

Although Issa and his family have endured a decline in their own circumstances and are intensely poor, Issa notes that the lives of others in his community have improved because other families receive monetary transfers from their children and they also own livestock.

For his own household, Issa wishes for better housing, as well as financial assistance from the government or other agencies to help him raise his children. He asks for equipment, such as a rickshaw, shovels, picks, and irrigation machinery, to aid his household in earning a living. And he expresses hope that sharing his story will help to educate members of the government and policymakers about the reality of his and other poor people's lives, so that help may be given and their living conditions improved.



Issa is poor according to the Global MPI. The coloured boxes in the graphic (left) show the deprivations he faces.