



COMCEC

# CCO BRIEF ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION

COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE

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## I. Introduction

Poverty alleviation is an important component of economic and social development. Although most of the developing countries have experienced significant progress in poverty alleviation in the last decades, poverty levels are still high in many countries. Especially, the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia account for nearly half of the total poor living in developing countries. Twenty-one of the forty-six countries on the list of least developed countries are members of the OIC and poverty is a very serious problem in these countries.

As an important component of economic and social development, poverty alleviation was identified as a cooperation area in the COMCEC Strategy. The Strategy established the Poverty Alleviation Working Group (PAWG) with the strategic objective of “Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger in the member countries”.

In this context, the PAWG attaches great importance to improving the living conditions of the poor and increasing their productive capacities by providing more effective social assistance to the poor. In line with this perspective, the PAWG discussed (i) targeting mechanisms of social safety net systems in its 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, (ii) monitoring mechanisms of social safety net systems in its 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, (iii) institutional structure of social safety net programs in its 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, (iv) accessibility of vulnerable groups to social protection programs in its 7<sup>th</sup> meeting, (v) skills development through vocational education in its 12<sup>th</sup> meeting, and finally (vi) effective social assistance provision and socio-economic empowerment in light of COVID-19 Pandemic in its 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> meetings. The research reports prepared on these topics laid the groundwork for discussions and enriched the discussions at the relevant meeting.

The COVID-19 outbreak has disrupted economies and worsened the state of poverty globally. Paralyzing daily life in many aspects the outbreak has devastating impacts on the global economy resulting in recession and downsizing. Most of the companies have difficulties to carry on their activities and a high number of people have lost their jobs. The situation of the poor is much more fragile.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic erased several years of efforts in poverty alleviation. While the economic contraction due to the COVID-19 has been relatively slower in the OIC region, the impact on poverty has been drastic. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase of more than 13 million poor people in OIC countries from 2019 to 2021. Despite this background, the policy response has been slower among the OIC members than in the rest of the world.

## II. Poverty Alleviation Efforts under the COMCEC

As the COVID-19 pandemic has put a severe burden on economies, unfortunately, achievements in poverty alleviation in the last decades have been adversely affected. As a result of the restrictions applied to prevent the spread of the virus, the economic problems experienced worldwide led to job losses and other income losses, so more people became poor.

According to the International Labour Organization, the global youth (ages 15-24) unemployment rate is at 15.6 per cent in 2021, more than three times the adult rate. Furthermore, alarmingly, the proportion of the youth who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) has increased to its highest level in at the last 15 years.

The situation is even worse in OIC member countries, where the youth unemployment rate and NEET rate are 19.97% and 25.8%, respectively, and have been increasing since 2020. This

increase has been partly due to COVID-19 pandemic, which has further worsened the hardly achieved gains towards improving the labour market situation in OIC member countries and elsewhere. For this reason, in accordance with the global development agenda, youth unemployment is an important research and policy priority in OIC member countries.

Due to the importance of the subject, the Poverty Alleviation Working Group has dedicated its Meetings in 2023 to the issue of reducing youth unemployment through effective vocational education and training programs. In this respect, 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the PAWG was held on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, in a virtual-only format, with the theme “Effective Vocational Education and Training Strategies to Reduce Youth Unemployment in the OIC Member Countries.” The 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Working Group will be held with the same theme in October, 2023.

Within this framework, since the 38<sup>th</sup> COMCEC Session the COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group held its 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting focusing on the youth unemployment and vocational education.

### **A. Effective Vocational Education and Training Strategies to Reduce Youth Unemployment in the OIC Member Countries**

#### **(20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Meetings of the Poverty Alleviation Working Group)**

The 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group was held virtually on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with the theme “Effective Vocational Education and Training Strategies to Reduce Youth Unemployment in the OIC Member Countries.”

A research report with the same theme is being prepared for two consecutive COMCEC PAWG meetings (20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>). While the first draft version of the report was submitted to the 20<sup>th</sup> PAWG meeting, the final version of the report will be submitted to the 21<sup>st</sup> PAWG meeting.

The draft report includes background and key concepts of youth unemployment and vocational education, and reviews the experiences and recommended practices from the OIC as well as non-OIC countries. Furthermore, the report will cover four case country analyses on the issue namely Germany, Tunisia, Türkiye, and Uganda backed by field visits with government agencies and private sector counterparts.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Working Group thoroughly elaborated on the issue and considered the main findings of the draft research report. Participants shared their country experiences in reducing youth unemployment through effective employment tools including the vocational education and training.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Working Group will be held in October 2023 and it will consider the final report on the subject. The final report will come up with a Guide including policy recommendations to give insights about effective ways of developing functional vocational education and training strategies to enhance the employability of the youth by the conditions of employment markets in the OIC Member Countries. The participants will discuss the Policy Recommendations to be considered by the 39<sup>th</sup> COMCEC Ministerial Session. The research report and the Policy Recommendations document will be available on the COMCEC website ([www.comcec.org](http://www.comcec.org)).

**B. COMCEC Project Funding**

COMCEC Project Funding (CPF) is the other important instrument of the Strategy. Projects financed under the CPF serve cooperation among member counties and are designed in accordance with the objectives and the expected outcomes defined by the Strategy in the poverty alleviation section. Projects also play important roles in realization of the policy recommendations formulated by the member countries during the PAWG meetings.

Under the 10<sup>th</sup> Call for Project Proposals, 2 projects were selected in the area of poverty alleviation to be implemented in 2023. The projects being implemented under the CPF in 2023 are as follows:

The first project’s title is “Improving interoperability between information systems of social assistance programs” and the project is being implemented by Benin. The project aims at improving strong and interoperable social assistance systems for effective social assistance delivery services. In this regard, study visit and training will be organized in the project.

The second project, titled as “Promoting Digital Technologies for an Integrated and Efficient Social Protection Systems in the OIC Member Countries”, is being implemented by SESRIC. The main objective of the project is to share best practices and tools for high-level digital involvement and inclusive social protection and to increase the capacities of the staff working in relevant areas. In this regard, training and workshop will be organized in the project.

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