



CCO BRIEF
ON
POVERTY
ALLEVIATION

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I. Introduction

Poverty remains as a significant challenge to economic and social development worldwide. Although most developing countries made significant progress in reducing poverty in recent decades, poverty levels are still high in many countries. In particular, the countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia account for nearly half of all 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 severe problem in these countries.

As an important component of economic and social development, poverty alleviation has been identified as an area of cooperation 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.”

To achieve this goal, the PAWG attaches great importance to contributing to the efforts aimed at improving the living conditions of the poor and increasing their productive capacities. In line with this perspective, the PAWG discussed (i) targeting mechanisms of social safety net systems in its 2nd meeting, (ii) monitoring mechanisms of social safety net systems in its 3rd meeting, (iii) institutional structure of social safety net programs in its 4th meeting, (iv) accessibility of vulnerable groups to social protection programs in its 7th meeting, (v) skills development through vocational education in its 12th meeting, and finally (vi) effective social assistance delivery and socio-economic empowerment in light of COVID-19 pandemic in its 18th and 19th meetings. The research reports prepared on these topics served as a basis for deliberations and enriched the discussions at each meeting.

The COVID-19 outbreak has disrupted economies and worsened the state of poverty worldwide. By paralyzing daily life in many ways, the outbreak has had a devastating impact on the global economy, causing in recession and downsizing. Most businesses have struggled to continue operations, and large numbers of people have lost their jobs. The situation of the poor is much more fragile.

The COVID-19 pandemic has set back poverty reduction efforts by several years. While the economic contraction caused by COVID-19 in the OIC countries was relatively slow, 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 in the OIC member countries has been slower than in the rest of the world.

The pandemic, along with conflicts and other political issues, has led to a global spiral of high inflation. This, in turn, has increased poverty while also pushing the fight against poverty into the background. Therefore, poverty reduction has become a development issue that requires more attention and more effort from international development cooperation.

II. Poverty Alleviation Efforts under the COMCEC

The frequency and intensity of natural disasters have increased globally in recent decades, largely due to several factors, including climate change, population growth, urbanization, and environmental degradation. The climate crisis is exacerbating the frequency and severity of natural disasters, including heat waves, droughts, storms, floods, and wildfires with each passing year.

Limited access to resources, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of social support systems make the poor even more defenceless in times of crisis. Efforts to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of natural disasters should prioritize building the resilience of the poor. This includes investments in early warning systems, infrastructure improvements, disaster preparedness and response mechanisms, and sustainable development strategies that take into account the increasing risks posed by climate change.

Due to the importance of the subject, the Poverty Alleviation Working Group has dedicated its Meetings in 2024 to alleviating the adverse effects of natural disasters on the poor. In this respect, the 22nd Meeting of the PAWG was held on May 2nd, 2024, in a virtual-only format, with the theme “Alleviating Adverse Effects of Natural Disasters on Poor Segments of Society in the OIC Member Countries.” The 23rd Meeting of the Working Group will be held with the same theme in September 2024.

A. Alleviating Adverse Effects of Natural Disasters on Poor Segments of Society in the OIC Member Countries

(22nd and 23rd Meetings of the Poverty Alleviation Working Group)

The 22nd Meeting of the COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group was held virtually on May 2nd, 2024 with the theme “Alleviating Adverse Effects of Natural Disasters on Poor Segments of Society in the OIC Member Countries.”

A research with the same theme is being prepared for two consecutive COMCEC PAWG meetings (22nd and 23rd). While the first draft version of the report was submitted to the 22nd PAWG meeting, the final version of the report will be submitted to the 23rd PAWG meeting.

The first draft of the report includes scope, methodology along with one case country analysis. The report will cover five case countries analyses on the issue, namely Egypt, Indonesia, Japan, Türkiye, and Uganda, supported by field visits with government agencies and NGOs.

The 22nd Meeting of the Working Group elaborated on the issue and considered the preliminary findings of the draft research report. Participants shared their experiences in reducing the adverse effects of natural disasters.

The 23rd Meeting of the Working Group will be held in September 2024 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 strengthening resilience against disasters in the OIC Member Countries. The participants will discuss the Policy Recommendations to be considered by the 40th COMCEC Ministerial Session. The research report and the Policy Recommendations document will be available on the COMCEC website (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.

In 2024, 2 projects have been selected in the area of poverty alleviation to be implemented as follows:

The first project's title is "Developing Policy Framework Capacity in the Field of Social Security After Natural Disasters" and the project will be implemented by Türkiye with the partnership of Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, Tunisia, and SESRIC. The project aims at producing better policies and strengthening member countries' preparedness and swift response capacity by discussing the possible measures and good practices. In this regard, Conference and Workshop will be organized in the project.

The second project, titled "Empowering Youth through Enhancing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET): A Pathway to Employment and Success" will be implemented by SESRIC for the benefit of 15 Member Countries. The main objective of the project is to identify key factors for improving TVET strategies and increase the capacities of the staff working in relevant areas of TVET. In this regard, a training and workshop will be organized in the project.
