



CCO BRIEF ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION

COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE
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I. Introduction

Since 1990, the world has witnessed remarkable progress in the fight against extreme poverty, with more than 1 billion people lifted out of poverty. The global extreme poverty rate fell from 36 percent in 1990 to 10 percent in 2015, a historic achievement largely driven by rapid economic growth across East Asia, the Pacific, and South Asia. This period marked unprecedented global development gains, offering millions of people not only increased incomes but also improved opportunities and livelihoods.

However, the pace of poverty reduction has slowed significantly, impacted by sluggish economic growth and mounting global challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic, combined with high inflation, rising indebtedness, geopolitical conflicts, climate-related shocks, and growing fragility, has severely disrupted poverty reduction efforts, particularly in low-income countries. By 2024, an estimated 8.5 percent of the global population—about 692 million people—continued to live in extreme poverty on incomes below \$2.15 per person per day. While this figure represents a modest improvement compared to 713 million people in 2023, it also highlights the fragility of recent gains.

Although notable progress has been made globally in poverty reduction, this progress has been uneven across regions. Poverty remains deeply rooted in many countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where rates continue to be alarmingly high and little advancement has been observed over the past decades. Moreover, in areas where poverty has declined, rising income inequality poses a significant ongoing challenge. Economic growth has not consistently translated into inclusive development, and wealth disparities have widened in numerous contexts. While the reduction in monetary poverty is commendable, persistent issues such as inequality, interregional imbalances, and the long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic underscore that the eradication of poverty remains an unfinished agenda.

Given that twenty-one out of the forty-four countries included in the Least Developed Countries list are OIC member countries, it is evident that poverty is a significant challenge for the OIC. Therefore, the COMCEC Strategy identified poverty alleviation as one of the cooperation areas and the Poverty Alleviation Working Group (PAWG) was established with the strategic objective of “eradicating extreme poverty and hunger in the member countries.”

II. Poverty Alleviation Efforts under the COMCEC

Securing adequate and affordable housing continues to be a major challenge across many developing nations, especially for low-income groups. Accelerated urbanization, demographic pressures and increasing building expenses have worsened the expansion of informal settlements and poor-quality housing. As a result, millions face heightened risks to health, social marginalization, and greater exposure to environmental threats. Achieving decent housing for all necessitates holistic and inclusive policy frameworks that move beyond the narrow concept of shelter provision. Robust housing strategies should focus on critical dimensions such as tenure security, reliable access to infrastructure and essential services, affordability, and construction methods that are resilient to climate change.

In this context, well-directed public investments, strong public–private collaboration, and community-driven solutions are key to sustainably upgrading living conditions. Moreover, housing policies need to be integrated into broader national development agendas and urban planning systems to secure equitable outcomes and long-lasting impact.

Due to the importance of the subject, the Poverty Alleviation Working Group has dedicated its meetings in 2025 to the issue of decent housing. Within this framework, since the 41st COMCEC Session, the COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group held its 24th and 25th Meetings focusing on social housing strategies.

A. Decent Housing for the Poor in the OIC Member Countries

(24th and 25th Meetings of the Poverty Alleviation Working Group)

The 24th Meeting of the COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group was held virtually on April 24th, 2025 with the theme “Decent Housing for the Poor in the OIC Member Countries.” The 25th Meeting of the Working Group was held on 15-16 September 2025 in Ankara, Türkiye with the same theme.

A research report with the same theme is being prepared for two consecutive COMCEC PAWG meetings (24th and 25th). While the first draft version of the guide was submitted to the 24th PAWG meeting, the final version of the guide was presented during the 25th PAWG meeting.

The guide includes introduction, methodology, background and key concepts of housing policies and strategies, and reviews the experiences and recommended practices from the OIC as well as non-OIC countries. Moreover, the guide covers five case country analyses on the subject, namely Egypt, Morocco, Malaysia, Türkiye and Singapore backed by field visits with government agencies and NGOs.

The 24th and 25th Meetings of the Working Group thoroughly elaborated on the issue and considered the main findings of the draft guide. Participants shared their experiences in housing strategies and policies for the poor segment of society.

The guide aims to shed light on the significant challenges faced by OIC Member Countries in ensuring access to decent, adequate, and affordable housing for the poorer segments of society. It highlights the multidimensional nature of housing deprivation, encompassing issues of affordability, overcrowding, informality, and inadequate infrastructure, and emphasizes the urgent need for targeted interventions to improve housing conditions, strengthen resilience, and ensure social equity.

Furthermore, the guide provides an overview of housing deficits, informal settlements, and access to basic infrastructure and services across OIC Member Countries. It assesses how poverty, rapid urbanization, and weak land governance systems contribute to inadequate housing and spatial inequalities.

The guide also reviews housing policy frameworks and institutional practices to assess the overall state of housing governance among OIC Member Countries, with a particular focus on the needs and vulnerabilities of low-income communities. Moreover, the guide indicates that while many countries have developed national housing strategies, significant gaps remain, particularly in financing mechanisms, policy coordination, and the inclusion of poor and informal settlement dwellers in housing planning and upgrading processes.

The final guide has also come up with a Guide including policy recommendations to give insights about effective housing policies and strategies in the OIC Member Countries. After listening to the main findings of the guide and policy options drafted therein, the participants discussed the Policy Recommendations to be considered by the 41st COMCEC Ministerial Session.

In this respect, the Working Group came up with the following policy recommendations to be submitted to the 41st COMCEC Ministerial Session. The research report and the Policy Recommendations document will be available on the COMCEC website (www.comcec.org).

- *Adopting Future-Proof and Integrated Housing Strategies, including Social Housing, through addressing urbanization challenges, demographic shifts, climate risks, and housing price fluctuations*
- *Strengthening Housing Resilience through rehabilitation of existing stock and advancing Innovative Construction technologies, including modular, prefabricated, and climate-adapted construction methods, and increasing R&D programs on social housing*
- *Adopting Flexible and Data-Driven pro-poor Housing Regulations, including rent control, land use zoning, and loan-to-value ratios, to improve credibility, fairness, and efficiency in housing systems*
- *Embedding Social Dimensions and Inclusive Governance to reflect cultural traditions, family structures, and community networks in Housing Programs*
- *Expanding Affordable Rental Options and Mobilizing Vacant Housing, including tax relief, rental guarantees, or targeted penalties for long-term vacancy*
- *Improving Housing Access for the Poorest through Targeted State-Led Programs, which are also supported by the private sector and NGOs, that combine tailored subsidies, cross-subsidized developments, or outright public provision*
- *Diversifying Housing Finance through Islamic Financing Instruments, including Murabaha, Ijarah, Sukuk, and Collective Models*
- *Building Stable and Inclusive Housing Investment Ecosystems through instruments such as Real Estate Investment Trust (REITs), Real Estate Investment Fund (REIFs), and sukuk-backed housing bonds, linked to pension and savings funds*

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 countries 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 the realization of the policy recommendations formulated by the member countries during the PAWG meetings.

In 2025, one project has been selected in the area of poverty alleviation to be implemented as follows:

The project's title is "Developing an Effective Roadmap for Facilitating Digital Transition in National VET Systems in OIC Member Countries" and the project was implemented by SESRIC with the partnership of Azerbaijan, Chad, Iraq, Jordan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Tunisia, Türkiye, The Gambia, OIC Labor Centre. The project aimed at providing guidance by developing a roadmap for OIC member countries to facilitate their digital transition in the vocational education and training systems for improving workforce competencies and employability. In this regard, two workshops were organized in the project.



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