

# Multidimensional Poverty and COVID 19 in Indonesia



The key responses needed to contain COVID 19 are regular hand-washing and physical distancing from others. In contexts of poverty, these measures may not be possible.

In 2018, researchers from The Australian National University led a study of multidimensional poverty in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, **using the Individual Deprivation Measure (IDM)**. Here we draw on data from one district, where 2881 women and men over the age of sixteen years were surveyed.



## WATER DEPRIVATION

Regular hand washing and cleaning high-touch surfaces are individuals' main defence against COVID 19. To achieve this, safe and easy access to water is essential.

Over one quarter of people surveyed had to collect water from a source outside their home.

- Access to water varied significantly in the regions surveyed:
  - **Rural** - one third of people surveyed had to leave their home to collect water
  - **Urban** - just over 10 percent of people had to leave their home to collect water
- People in rural areas were twice as likely as those in urban areas to report not always having water for domestic use (such as washing clothes and dishes).
- Women were most likely to report being responsible for water collection.
- Almost 13 percent of respondents across rural and urban populations reported not having enough containers to carry or store water for more than one day.

A person with no access to water in their home is forced to choose between reducing hand washing and other cleaning that could prevent COVID 19, or reducing their physical distancing by leaving home daily to collect water.



## SANITATION DEPRIVATION

### HANDWASHING

Having access to soap and a safe place to wash hands is critically important in slowing the spread of COVID 19. The IDM findings show that poverty prevents people from exercising the levels of hygiene needed to stem the spread of coronavirus.

One quarter of people surveyed had no place in their house or yard to wash their hands. Around 13 percent of people surveyed reported not having access to soap for hand washing.

- The percentage of people unable to use soap was higher in urban areas than in rural areas.
- Access to hand-washing facilities varied dramatically between regions:
  - **Rural** - just over 30 percent of people had no place to wash their hands at home
  - **Urban** - eight percent of people had no place to wash their hands at home
  - **Remote islands** - 59 percent of people had no place to wash their hands at home
- Women were more likely than men to have no access to hand washing facilities at home.

A person with no handwashing facilities at their home cannot carry out the frequent handwashing essential to protecting themselves from COVID 19.  
A person without soap cannot wash their hands effectively, increasing their risk of contracting COVID 19.

## TOILET FACILITIES

No access to private toilet facilities is a significant reason for people having to regularly leave their home and go into public spaces during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Almost one quarter of respondents did not have access to toilet facilities in their own house or yard.

- Almost nine percent of respondents used only public toilets.
- Almost six percent used toilets shared with other households.
- Women were more likely than men to use private shared toilets.
- Men were more likely than women to rely on public toilets.
- Access to toilet facilities in the home varied across regions surveyed in South Sulawesi:
  - Rural - almost 29 percent reported no access to a toilet in their own property
  - Urban - less than three percent reported no access to a toilet in their own property

The most basic human functions require people to interact in spaces shared with others, and so expose themselves to the risk of contracting or spreading COVID 19.



## CROWDING IN THE HOME

One of the cornerstones of containing the spread of COVID 19 is physical distancing from others. Findings from the IDM survey in Indonesia indicate that overcrowding in homes presents a barrier to individuals being able to self-isolate during the pandemic.

Almost nineteen percent of respondents reported their home was too crowded to live comfortably.

- One in ten people in urban areas reported significant overcrowding in their homes.
- Overcrowding is more acute in rural areas.

Even if people can remain in their homes, overcrowding means they will be in very close physical proximity to others, increasing their risk of exposure to COVID 19.

## IMPLICATIONS & RESPONSES

Responding to the COVID 19 pandemic in contexts of poverty presents a major challenge. Urgent strategies are needed to:

- Provide safe, public access points for water collection, handwashing, and sanitation
- Ensure that people have sufficient soap for handwashing
- Understand that poverty will place barriers on people's ability to follow public health messages, and that these barriers will be different depending on a person's gender, location and circumstances.