

IWDA further evidence on notice

31 July 2023

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into the rights of women and children

Further information on Equality Insights

As outlined in IWDA's submission and evidence to the inquiry, Equality Insights is an individual level, gender-sensitive measure of multidimensional poverty which provides data that goes beyond the household level. This is critical, as most surveys used for poverty measurement collect household-level data, which limits disaggregation and can hide differences in needs, opportunities and access to resources within households.

Equality Insights is:

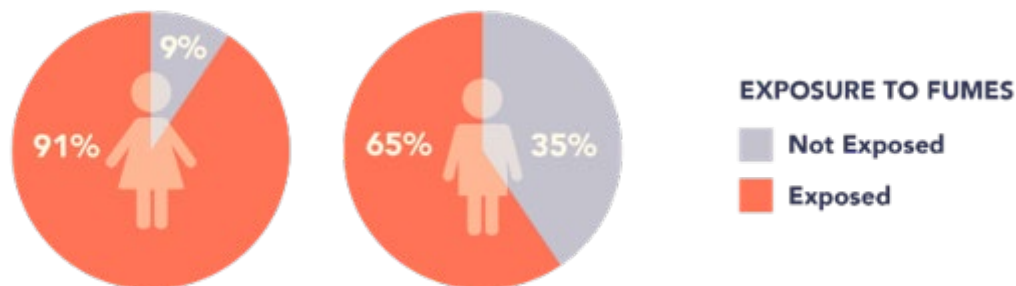
- **Intersectional:** Provides insight into how multiple characteristics such as gender and disability, age and gender intersect to influence the experience of poverty
- **Multidimensional:** Assesses 15 dimensions of life, based on participatory research across 6 countries with some 3000 people with lived experience of poverty. Also assesses financial deprivation via assets, to show where multidimensional and financial circumstances are related, and where they are not
- **Gender-sensitive:** Includes aspects of life that are shaped by gender, rather than only focusing on what people have in common, and uses gender-sensitive indicators where possible
- **Scalar:** Assesses each dimension on a scale, to show multiple levels of deprivation; how poor you are influences what you need to be not poor
- **Within-household:** Samples multiple adults in a household to reveal differences between household members and capture inequalities inside households, where an estimated 1/3 of global inequality is found

As outlined in our submission to the inquiry, the Australian Government has been supporting Equality Insights in various formats since 2008. There are a range of practical ways that the Australian Government can build on its support for gender-sensitive data.

Examples of insights gained

A 2016 study in Fiji, using a previous iteration of the Equality Insights tool, provides an example of the kinds of insights which can be gained from individual-level, gender-sensitive, multidimensional poverty data.¹

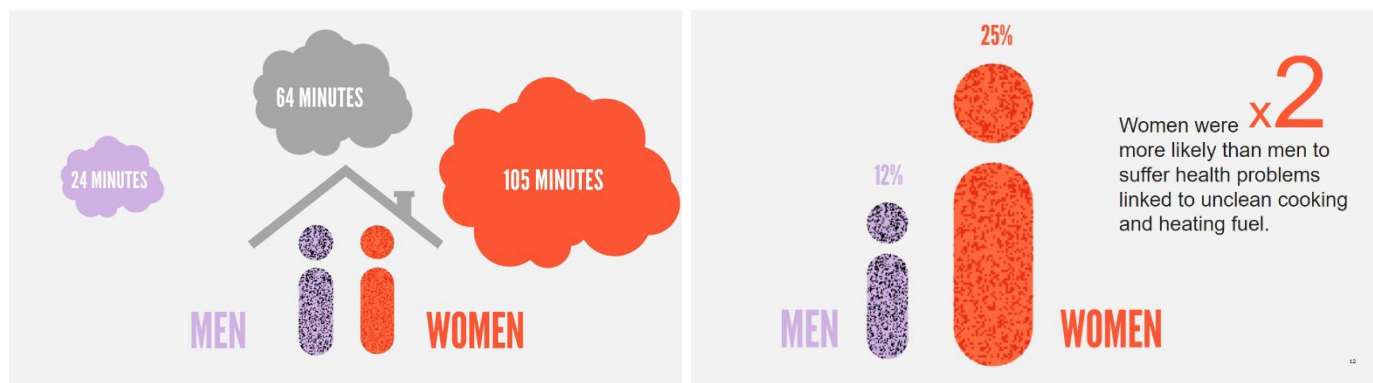
The survey found that on average, household members in the survey were exposed to harmful fumes for 64 minutes per day. However, when the data is disaggregated by gender, it shows that exposure to fumes and associated risks are not shared equally: 91% of women reported exposure to harmful fumes related to cooking and heating, compared to 65% men. This is due to the gendered division of



¹ Kylie Fisk and Joanne Crawford, *Exploring Multidimensional Poverty in Fiji: Findings from a Study Using the Individual Deprivation Measure* (Melbourne, Australia: IWDA, 2017).

roles and responsibilities in households, meaning that more women faced exposure to fumes than men.

The importance of being able to see individual exposure is further illustrated by looking at the amount of time people were exposed – on average this was 64 minutes per day, but this average hides lived realities: for women, average exposure time was 105 minutes per day, compared to just 24 minutes per day for men. Household-level analysis, then, provides inaccurate information about both the scale of the problem and who experiences it.



As a result of their greater exposure, women were 2 times more likely than men to suffer health problems linked to unclean cooking and heating fuel, and the impacts were more likely to be severe. These impacts were even greater for women living in informal settlements.

Such insights are possible because Equality Insights assesses multiple dimensions of life at an individual level and in a way that is gender-sensitive.

Examples of how *Equality Insights* and associated data² has been used in the Pacific

Fiji

- In **February 2016, following Cyclone Winston**, a brief using disaggregated **Fiji data** informed the work of the UN Humanitarian Cluster.
- In May 2020, as the impacts of COVID-19 and responses to it started to be felt in the Pacific, IWDA developed a [brief on the likely implications of COVID-19](#) in Fiji, using *Equality Insights* data (collected in 2016, [reported in 2017](#)) for the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation and the Fiji Government’s COVID-19 Response Gender Working Group.
- The Fiji data and insights continue to inform the work of the Fiji Government, and were cited in the recently-released [Fiji Country Gender Assessment: Deep Dive 2023](#).

Solomon Islands

- In August 2020, as the impacts of COVID-19 and responses to it started to be felt in the Pacific, IWDA provided a [brief on the likely implications of COVID-19](#) in Solomon Islands, using *Equality Insights* data collected in two provinces, Central and Guadalcanal, in March and April 2020.
- In 2021, *Equality Insights* data supported the Solomon Islands’ Ministry of Women Youth Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) to develop the first-ever gender strategies for Central and Guadalcanal Provinces.
- At an event in the margins of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March 2022, the Director of the Women’s Development division in the Solomon Islands MWYCFA said that the data also gave her the confidence to more effectively advocate for gender equality work at the whole of government level.

“In our context where there is a long list of priorities and where everything seems to be a

² Data collected prior to August 2020 was under an earlier name, the Individual Deprivation Measure.

priority, with very limited resources, disaggregated data is vital for prioritizing, strategic planning and focused and targeted programs and actions.

While there is a strong policy environment for addressing gender equality ... and I may know the broad outlines of gender inequality, without quality gender data about scope and scale, it is much more difficult to lobby and advocate for support to prioritise gender equality and allocate resources in national budgets....

One thing for sure, especially for me, was how much the disaggregated data from the study boosted my confidence in undertaking lobbying and advocacy for gender equality.”

- Dignity Pacific, a women-led Honiara-based research firm, contracted as the data collection partner in 2020 and 2022, used information from the 2020 survey in a baseline assessment they conducted in 2021 for Habitat for Humanity New Zealand on poverty and housing in Solomon Islands.
- The phone survey undertaken in Solomon Islands in 2022 using *Equality Insights Rapid* enabled establishment of the **first-ever Solomon Islands-based call centre** for remote survey administration and the first-ever phone survey implemented from inside Solomon Islands.
- While the Report from the *Equality Insights Rapid* 2022 survey has not yet been launched (forthcoming, October 2023), initial insights were shared with government and civil society in July 2023 to support developing an advocacy strategy to progress women's economic empowerment priorities.

Tonga

- The *Equality Insights Rapid* data collection in 2022 enabled the Kingdom of Tonga, through the Tongan Statistics Department, to undertake their first-ever national phone-based survey, establishing capacity and experience that provides a foundation for future use of phone surveys and setting standards for how this can be advanced more broadly across the region.
- This collaboration has provided disaggregated data that adds to data currently available. The initial [report](#) from the 2022 study was launched in June 2023, and used to engage with women leaders on using the data to progress gender equality.
- The *Equality Insights Rapid* data collected in Tonga is also bringing Pacific experience and innovation to global measurement conversations.
 - A Working Paper on [Assessing the relationship between gender and environment in an individual-level measure of multidimensional poverty: rationale, possibilities, and insights from Tonga](#) was prepared for the Economic Commission for Europe's Group of Experts on Gender Statistics in May 2023, and outlines the relevance of *Equality Insights* to the landscape of data on gender and environment, as the data was collected shortly after a significant volcanic eruption in Tonga in early 2022.
 - Further work in this area will be presented to the Ninth Global Forum on Gender Statistics in Johannesburg at the end of August 2023, drawing on a [brief](#) exploring insights in the Tonga context from water, sanitation and environment data collected by *Equality Insights Rapid*
 - A [blog](#) for the 2023 UN World Data Forum focused on the power of partnership in Tonga to enable innovation and inclusive poverty data
 - Then Government Statistician Viliami Konifelenisi Fifita Fifita supported the *Equality Insights Rapid* survey in Tonga, in part to enable assessment of what individual-level measurement of multidimensional poverty would add to Tonga's existing household-level approach to measuring multidimensional poverty.
 - A collaborative learning paper is planned, to inform regional guidance and wider methodology discussions.

Recommendations

These recommendations are adapted from a recent paper by Equality Insights Strategic Advisor Joanne Crawford published as part of the Australian Feminist Foreign Policy Coalition Issues Paper series: [Gender and poverty as a feminist foreign policy priority: Opportunities to accelerate action](#).³ The series explores the practical application of feminist foreign policy through specific issue areas. The recommendations included here have been adapted for relevance to the Australian Government and the focus of this inquiry.

1. Increase **funding for the production of individual-level gender-sensitive poverty data**, progressively substituting for household-level poverty surveys over time. Additionally, provide support for strengthening the capacity of government and civil society to use this data to inform gender-informed and responsive priorities, policies and programming, and for civil society to hold government accountable.
2. Use Australia's **standard-setting power** to increase the demand for and availability of gender sensitive data through bilateral and multilateral dialogue, eg:
 - a. Routinely ask institutional representatives whether disaggregated data and intersectional analysis has informed studies and reports, and about work planned to improve the availability of individual-level data.
 - b. In global, regional, sectoral and bilateral meetings, support implementation of relevant commitments and recommendations regarding collection and use of individual-level poverty data that can be routinely disaggregated by sex, age, disability and sociocultural background.
 - c. Use engagements with international financial institutions, the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development to encourage these institutions to advance understanding and demand for, and resourcing and availability of gender sensitive data on poverty and inequality.
3. Increase **funding for disaggregated, gender-sensitive data on poverty and inequality through global and regional multilateral institutions** (such as UN Women and UNDP) by linking a component of Australia's funding to implementation of analysis and recommendations to strengthen individual-level measurement of poverty and inequality.
4. Encourage **policy-level changes that strengthen attention to gender, poverty and inequality**. For example, DFAT should:
 - a. Require use of disaggregated data about poverty and inequality to inform development of new country strategies from 2025, or inclusion of such data collection as part of multi-year country strategies, to indicate a shift in minimum measurement standards.
 - b. Support investment in the capacity of national statistical systems to collect and use gender-sensitive poverty data.

³ Joanne Crawford, "Gender and Poverty as a Feminist Foreign Policy Priority: Opportunities to Accelerate Action," Issue 9. AFFPC Issues Paper Series. February 2023. <https://iwda.org.au/resource/gender-and-poverty-as-a-feminist-foreign-policy-priority/>.