

Social, cultural, and humanitarian committee (SOCHUM)



Topic A:

The topic of encouraging the application of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index

I. Introduction:

What is the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index?

The MVI is an international quantitative method of measuring structural vulnerability and the lack of structural resilience in a country across multiple dimensions of sustainable development. It can be used to complement Gross National Income per capita seeing as it considers a country's susceptibility to various challenges (United Nations). It operates on two different levels:

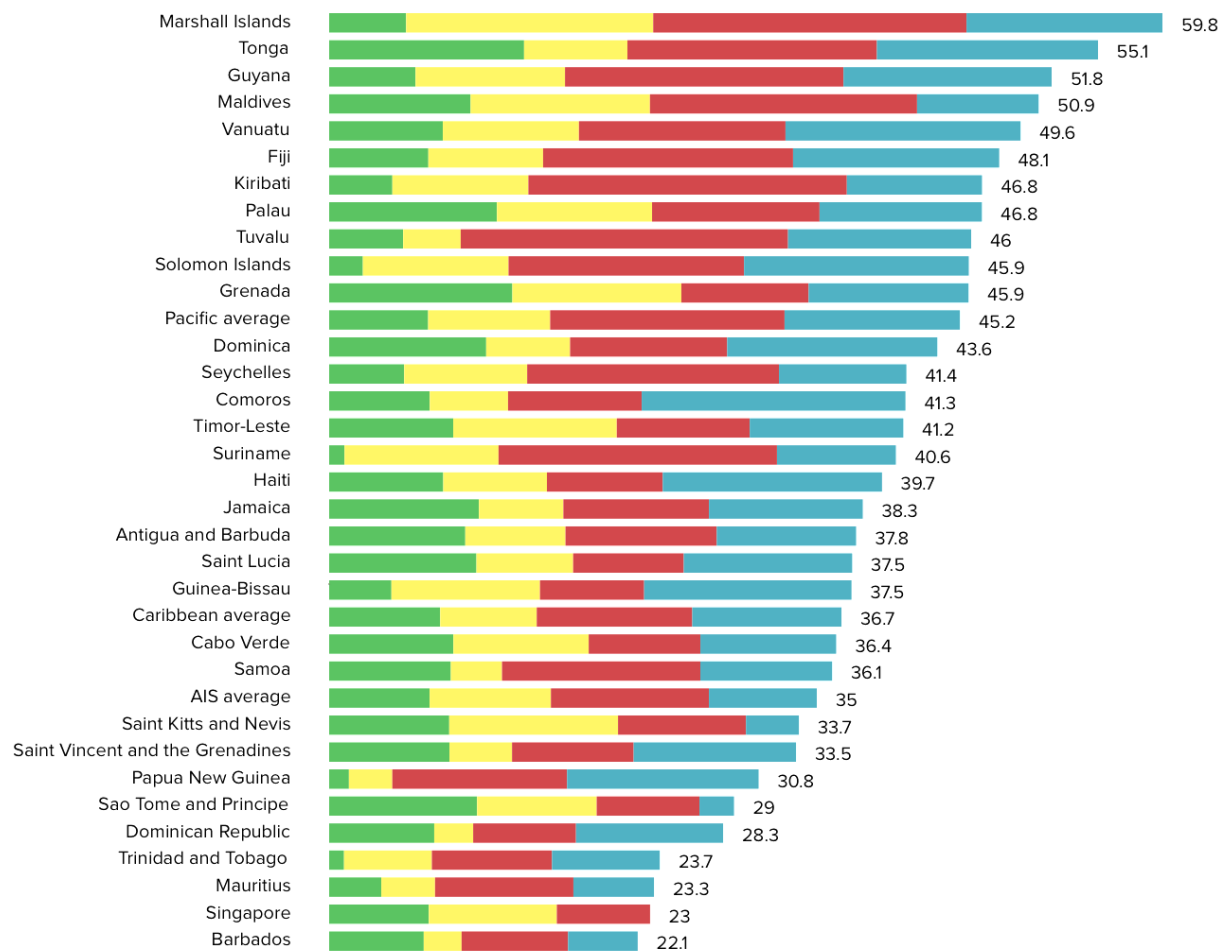
1. **Universal Level:** This involves a quantitative assessment of structural vulnerability and resilience using a common methodology applicable to all developing countries. The results are presented via a summary index number that ranks countries accordingly. (United Nations)
2. **Context-Specific Level:** This level allows for the incorporation of country-specific factors and nuances that may not be fully captured in the universal assessment, providing a more specific analysis of a country's vulnerabilities. (United Nations)

Why does it exist?

With the increase of global crises such as debt and climate change, many vulnerable countries are at an increased risk of facing structural vulnerability. Many such countries, like Small Island Developing States (SIDS), rely heavily on external financing to deal with those crises, making it more expensive to deal with problems like debt and climate change. In other words, the objective of the MVI is to ensure a truly inclusive sustainable development by recognizing other challenges faced (especially by SIDS) like climate change and natural disasters, which are not considered in traditional economic metrics (that heavily rely on per capita income). By utilizing the MVI, policy makers can better identify and address these structural vulnerabilities, facilitating more effective allocation of resources, financing, debt relief, and aid (United Nations). Although it's mostly relevant to SIDS, it is also relevant to Least Developed Countries and Developing Landlocked Countries ("MVI - Preliminary Country Scores | Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States").

How the MVI works:

It measures the structural vulnerability of relevant countries across multiple dimensions (economic, environmental, financial, and geographical) with an assigned score to each country, with a higher score indicating higher vulnerability. For example:



(“UNDP SIDS Data Platform”)

II. Definition of key terms:

1. **Structural vulnerability**: Refers to the inherent risk of a country's sustainable development being hindered by shocks, stressors, and crisis. These vulnerabilities are usually beyond the immediate control of the country and are not the result of their policies (*High Level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index FINAL REPORT*).
2. **Resilience**: Refers to a country's ability to withstand, recover from, or mitigate the impact of shocks and stressors. When talking about MVI, it is a structural factor that mitigates the long-term impacts of external shocks (*High Level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index FINAL REPORT*).
3. **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**: Refers to a group of countries that share similar sustainable development challenges, such as small population, limited resources, susceptibility to natural disasters, and vulnerability to external factors. The MVI was developed as a response to calls from SIDS for a more inclusive and tailored assessment of a country's well being beyond Gross National Income per capita (*High Level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index FINAL REPORT*). Examples can include St. Kitts and Nevis, Jamaica, Bahamas, Barbados, and more.
4. **Multidimensionality**: It is a principle that acknowledges that vulnerability spans multiple dimensions like economic, environmental, and social factors. The MVI incorporates this principle by assessing structural vulnerability and lack of resilience in accordance with those dimensions (*The Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for SIDS*).

5. **Gross National Income per capita (GNI pc):** It is a traditional economic metric that measures a country's average per capita income. While it is useful, it doesn't take into consideration a country's structural vulnerabilities, which the MVI aims to address.
6. **Sustainable development:** Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own needs. The MVI aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by addressing structural vulnerabilities that hinder progress (*High Level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index FINAL REPORT*).
7. **External shocks:** Refers to sudden and unexpected events from outside a country that can disrupt its development, such as natural disasters, economic crises, or pandemics. The MVI addresses a country's exposure to such shocks as part of its structural vulnerability (*High Level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index FINAL REPORT*).
8. **Equitable Resource Allocation:** The fair distribution of resources, including development assistance and financing, based on a country's specific vulnerabilities and needs (*High Level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index FINAL REPORT*).

III. Background information:

For three decades, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have been bringing forward the issue of traditional measures of development insufficiently capturing their structural vulnerabilities, while focusing only on GNI pc. The first call for development of globally accepted vulnerability assessment was made in **1992** at the **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development**. This was repeated by SIDS in the **1994 Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS** and was endorsed by the General Assembly. Between **1995** and **2003** there were further calls for the development of a multidimensional vulnerability index (“History of the MVI | Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States”).

IV. Previous attempts at solving the problem (with timeline):

In **2005**, the **Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the SIDS Programme of Action** emphasized the concern of the SIDS’s vulnerability. This was re-attempted in **2014**, when UN member states in the **Third International Conference on SIDS** revealed their commitment to “take urgent and concrete action to address the vulnerability indices for assessing the progress made in the sustainable development of SIDS”. Additionally, the **SAMOA Pathway** calls upon the UN to develop an appropriate metric to assess the progress made in the sustainable development of SIDS. International agencies, including the **World Bank**, have now set up dedicated offices for small states, created special funds to address their

specific needs, and strengthened their voices in international discussions. In **June and August 2020**, during the COVID-19 pandemic that posed a large problem to the already dire debt situation in SIDS, **Belize** and the **Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (OASIS)** wrote to the UN Secretary General reaffirming their need to advance work on the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index, to which the Secretary General responded that the ongoing work on an MVI will be crucial to redefine eligibility for financing for sustainable development in SIDS (“History of the MVI | Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States”).

Despite all those efforts, there remains the lack of international consensus on how to categorize and mitigate the SIDS’ vulnerabilities. There have also been further attempts to develop measures of vulnerability that are relevant for SIDS, for which only a few metrics already exist (Economic and Environmental Vulnerability Index (EVI), Human Development Index (HDI), and more). However, these metrics have all been criticized for their choice of indicators and data availability (“History of the MVI | Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States”).

V. Possible solutions:

In order to encourage the implementation of the MVI across vulnerable States worldwide, there needs to be a global effort to aid relevant countries in addressing their structural vulnerabilities in order to properly receive aid from the UN, and some solutions can include:

1. Incorporate MVI into International Aid Criteria

- a. Advocate for international organizations like the World Bank, and IMF to formally adopt the MVI as a criterion for allocating financial aid, development assistance, and concessional financing.

2. Global Policy Advocacy

- a. Strengthen advocacy campaigns to increase awareness of the MVI among policymakers, civil society organizations, and development agencies.

3. Capacity Building in Developing Countries

- a. Provide technical and financial support to developing nations to integrate the MVI into their national development strategies.
- b. Training local governments on data collection and analysis to align policies with MVI metrics.

4. Enhanced Data Collection Systems

- a. Invest in robust, consistent, and standardized data collection mechanisms to accurately measure vulnerability dimensions.
- b. Create partnerships with organizations and regional banks for capacity-building in data analytics.

5. Incentivize Adoption Through Debt Relief

- a. Encourage creditor nations and institutions to offer debt relief or restructuring to countries with high MVI scores as an incentive to adopt and operationalize the index.
- b. Linking debt forgiveness to climate-resilience investments aligned with MVI findings.

6. Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- a. Position the MVI as a complementary tool for measuring progress toward SDGs, especially goals related to inequality, climate action, and sustainable communities.
- b. Highlight synergies between MVI indicators and SDG targets in global forums.

7. Private Sector Collaboration

- a. Engage private sector stakeholders to adopt MVI-related metrics in their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and investments.
- b. Companies targeting high-MVI countries with resilience-building projects.

8. Pilot Programs and Success Stories

- a. Implement pilot programs in select countries to demonstrate the MVI's practical benefits and scalability.
- b. Document and share case studies of improved resilience in countries utilizing the MVI.

9. Institutionalize MVI in Development Agencies

- a. Embed the MVI within the operational frameworks of major development agencies, making it a mandatory component of vulnerability assessments.
- b. Requiring MVI analysis for project funding approvals by the World Bank.

10. Regional Coalitions

- a. Form coalitions of nations with similar vulnerability profiles (SIDS or Least Developed Countries) to collectively advocate for the MVI's use in global development dialogues.
- b. Jointly push for MVI recognition in climate finance negotiations under frameworks like the Paris Agreement.

VI. Works Cited

High Level Panel on the Development of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index FINAL REPORT.

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