

Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS)

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) is a household survey programme developed by UNICEF in the mid 90's to assist countries in filling data gaps for monitoring the situation of children and women. It is capable of producing statistically sound, internationally comparable estimates of these indicators.

The MICS was originally developed in response to the World Summit for Children (WSC) held in 1990 to measure progress towards an internationally agreed set of mid-decade goals. In this sense, MICS was basically developed to fill existing data gaps and to inform and complement existing data collection methods and instruments (e.g. administrative records, census, vital events registration, etc.).

The first round of MICS was conducted around 1995 in more than 60 countries. A second round of surveys was conducted in 1999-2001 to assess progress towards goals and objectives set for the year 2000. This second round was built on the mid-decade round and strengthened in many ways the previous survey program. It included an expanded set of indicators to monitor most of the 27 goals of the World Summit for Children (WSC), plus an additional set of indicators to monitor child rights and newly emerging areas of concern including, for example, Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI), malaria, and knowledge of HIV/AIDS. The second round of MICS produced around 65 surveys, and resulted in an increasing wealth of data to monitor the situation of children and women. For the first time, it also permitted the monitoring of trends in many indicators and set baselines for many other indicators.

The current round of MICS (MICS3) is focused on providing a monitoring tool for the World Fit for Children, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as for other major international commitments, such as the UNGASS on HIV/AIDS and the Abuja targets for malaria. Roughly 20 of the 48 MDG indicators can be collected in the present round of MICS, offering the largest single source of data for MDG monitoring. The current plans call for surveys to be executed in more than 50 countries around the year 2005. Availability of results is expected in late 2005 or early 2006. The surveys will cover many of the same topics as the earlier rounds and provide updated estimates and trends for many indicators. In addition, new indicators have been included to provide baseline data or estimates of coverage for UNICEF's current priorities.

MICS is based on multi-dimensional development concept. The survey questionnaires are modular tools that can be customized to the needs of a country¹. They consist of 3 core questionnaires: a household questionnaire, a questionnaire for women aged 15-49, and a questionnaire on the situation of children under the age of 5 (addressed to the caretaker of the child). A set of additional modules (to be used if the country is affected) and optional modules is also available. The inclusion of optional modules is decided at the country level.

¹ For the MICS, both the selection of countries and the choice of questions is done in conjunction with the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). DHS surveys are conducted in around 10 countries a year and besides the MICS are the primary sources of data on many health and household indicators. By coordinating both the countries surveyed and the questions included in the questionnaire modules, this ensures that there is maximum coverage of countries in the household surveys and provides comparability across surveys. The MICS surveys are typically carried out by government organizations, with the support and assistance of UNICEF and other partners. Technical assistance and training for the surveys is provided through a series of regional workshops, covering: questionnaire content, sampling and survey implementation, data processing, data quality and data use. A

Results from the surveys will be made available through UNICEF's web site dedicated to monitoring the situation of children and women at www.childinfo.org.

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