

ABOUT 41.5 CRORE INDIANS OUT OF MULTI-DIMENSIONAL POVERTY SINCE 2005-06

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Slight relief: While there has been a dip in poverty, it still remains a daunting challenge for India. BISWARANJAN ROUT

About 41.5 crore people exited poverty in India during the 15-year period between 2005-06 and 2019-21, out of which two-third exited in the first 10 years, and one-third in the next five years, according to the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) released on Monday.

The report produced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) shows that the incidence of poverty fell from 55.1% in 2005-06 to 16.4% in 2019-21 in the country and that deprivations in all 10 MPI indicators saw significant reductions as a result of which the MPI value and incidence of poverty more than halved.

Improvement in MPI for India has significantly contributed to the decline in poverty in South Asia and it is for the first time that it is not the region with the highest number of poor people, at 38.5 crore, compared with 57.9 crore in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The report doesn't fully assess the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on poverty in India as 71% of the data from the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-2021) relied upon for MPI were collected before the pandemic.

The global MPI constructs a deprivation profile of each household and person through 10 indicators spanning health, education and standard of living. All indicators are equally weighted within each dimension. The global MPI identifies people as multidimensionally poor if their deprivation score is 1/3 or higher.

Bihar, the poorest State in 2015-2016, saw the fastest reduction in MPI value in absolute terms. The incidence of poverty there fell from 77.4% in 2005-2006 to 34.7% in 2019-2021.

Despite the strides made, the report notes that the ongoing task of ending poverty remains daunting. India has by far the largest number of poor people worldwide at 22.8 crore, followed by Nigeria at 9.6 crore. Two-third of these people live in a household in which at least one person is deprived in nutrition. There were also 9.7 crore poor children in India in 2019-2021 — more than the total number of poor people, children and adults combined, in any other country covered by the global MPI.

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