

An Analysis of Socio-Economic Problem of Poverty in India

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Abstract: “End poverty in all its forms everywhere across the length and breadth.” The 2030 agenda recognizes that eradicating poverty, including extreme poverty in all its forms and magnitudes, is the utmost global challenge and a crucial prerequisite for sustainable development around the universe. Eradicating poverty is so important that it has been recognised as the first and the foremost Sustainable Development Goal. Poverty is an issue that affects billions of people around the world. It is said to exist when individuals lack the resources to fulfil their basic needs. Poverty has many dimensions, but some of its important causes include unemployment, social barring, and high susceptibility of certain populations to diseases, disasters, and other phenomena which avert them from being productive. The world’s largest democracy- India is a nation where poverty has been particularly prevalent since decades, but the country has made remarkable strides in reducing its overall poverty level in recent years. Over the past two decades, India has made remarkable progress in reducing extreme poverty. Between 2011 and 2019, the country is estimated to have halved the share of the population living in extreme poverty - below \$2.15 per person per day (2017 PPP) (World Bank, 2023). For more analysis on the status of poverty found in India, what it looks like, and how it is affecting the nation as a whole, the present paper examines India’s position in World poverty level as well as at the country level for past two decades using various indicators.

Key Words: Poverty, SDG, Poverty Index.

1. INTRODUCTION:

“Poverty is the worst form of violence,”- Mahatma Gandhi. It is a phenomenon that plagues the population particularly in the developing countries. Poverty is crucial issue concerning all aspects of human rights, sustainable development of the economies and social cohesion. This phenomenon has been concerning the international community since 1945. Ragner Nurske considers that those who are poor remain poor simply because at the mental and physical level they suffer from the pangs of poverty, which he calls secondary poverty. Despite significant progress in the last decades, global poverty- in all its different magnitudes and dimensions- remains a broad and entrenched problem. With increasingly progressive and rapidly developing world, one of the ironies continues to remain that poverty is widespread and rampant, and the vulnerable population appears to have grown even more vulnerable. Poverty entails more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination, and exclusion, as well as the lack of participation in decision-making. Poverty is defined as the state of not having sufficient income or material possessions such as food, clothing, and shelter to cover a person’s basic needs.

According to the World Bank, 2000, poverty is pronounced deprivation in wellbeing, where well-being can be measured by an individual’s possession of income, health, nutrition, education, assets, housing, and certain rights in a society such as freedom of speech. Also, poverty is a lack of opportunities, powerlessness, and vulnerability. Poverty is truly a multi-dimensional phenomenon in such a setting and requires multi-dimensional policy and program interventions in order to improve the well-being of individuals and, hence, make them free from poverty. Poverty is the state of not having enough material possessions or income for a person basic need. Poverty may include social, economic, and political elements. Absolute poverty is the complete lack of the means necessary to meet basic personal needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter.

Global poverty is one of the most persistent problems that the world faces today. The poorest in the world are regularly undernourished, without access to necessities such as electricity, safe drinking water, shelter, less or no access to education, and suffer from much poorer health and sanitation. In 2015, more than 736 million people lived below the international poverty line. Around 10 per cent of the world population (pre-pandemic) was living in extreme poverty

and struggling to fulfil the most basic needs like health, education, and access to water and sanitation, to name a few. There were 122 women aged 25 to 34 living in poverty for every 100 men of the same age group, and more than 160 million children were at risk of continuing to live in extreme poverty by 2030 (UN, 2023).

Eradicating extreme poverty for all people everywhere by 2030 is a pivotal goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Between 2015 and 2018, global poverty continued its historical decline, with the poverty rate falling from 10.1 per cent in 2015 to 8.6 per cent in 2018. Data suggests that owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global poverty rate increased sharply from 8.3 per cent in 2019 to 9.2 per cent in 2020, representing the first increase in extreme poverty since 1998 and the largest increase since 1990 and setting back poverty reduction by about three years. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic reversed the steady progress of poverty reduction over the past 25 years. This unprecedented reversal is being further exacerbated by rising inflation and the impacts of the war in Ukraine. It is estimated that these combined crises will lead to an additional 75 million–95 million people living in extreme poverty in 2022, compared with pre-pandemic projections (SDG, 2023)

India got its independence under miserable conditions of poverty. India's first Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru gave the famous tryst with destiny speech post India's independence on 15 August 1947. In the speech he said: "The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and poverty and disease and inequality of opportunity." At the time of independence, there were expectations that nearly 80 percent of population lived under poverty. The main purpose of economic and social policy was to lower poverty. The world's largest democracy is still considered to be a home to the largest number of hungry people in the world and the largest number of children who are malnourished. Notwithstanding having made considerable progress in GDP growth. India is a land of inconsistencies and disparities where poverty and prosperity, excessive food production and hunger, coexist. In recent years, however, the pace of poverty reduction has slowed but the key welfare indicators have also been slow to improve. Recent estimates suggest that extreme poverty increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic but moderated in 2021-22 as access to vaccines became widespread (World Bank, 2023). The most populous country in the world, India has witnessed steady and remarkable economic growth and has achieved self-sufficiency in grain production in recent years. However, high levels of hunger, poverty, malnutrition, and food insecurity still persist. Poverty remains one the India's gravest social and economic challenges, despite its growing economy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The literature on poverty in India is vast and many of the contributions or references to the contributions can be found in Srinivasan and Bardhan (1974, 1988), Fields (1980), Tendulkar (1998), Dutt (1998) for complete and updated series on poverty measures for India spanning the period 1951–1994, Deaton and Drèze (2002), Bhalla (2002), and Deaton and Kozel (2005). Panagariya (2008) provides a comprehensive treatment of the subject until the mid-2000s including the debates on whether poverty had declined in the post-reform era and whether reforms had been behind the acceleration in growth rates and the decline in poverty. Finally, several of the contributions in Bhagwati and Panagariya (2012a, 2012b) analysed various aspects of poverty in India using the expenditures surveys up to 2004–2005. In particular, Cain, Hasan, and Mitra (2012) study the impact of openness on poverty; Mukim and Panagariya (2012) document the decline in poverty across social groups; Dehejia and Panagariya (2012) provide evidence on the growth in entrepreneurship in services sectors among the socially disadvantaged groups. Panagariya et al (2013) found that accelerated growth between fiscal years 2004-2005 and 2009-2010 led to an accelerated decline in poverty rates. Moreover, the decline in poverty rates during these years was sharper for the socially disadvantaged groups relative to upper caste groups. Junofy (2013) studied the intensity of poverty and hunger in India using the indices like Global Hunger Index, Below Poverty Line Index and Multidimensional Poverty Index calculated by various global institutions. Alok (2020) discussed various aspects and problems of poverty in India. To make the calculations and definitions of poverty clearer, Rangarajan and Dev (2020) discussed the methodology for measuring poverty using various indicators like calories, multi-dimensional poverty, urban poverty, NAS-NSS consumption differences, poverty measures in other countries, public expenditure and poverty, headcount and depth of poverty, inequality & poverty and, criteria for eligibility under programmes. Sharath (2020) discussed the causes of Rural Poverty and Anti-Poverty Program and examined why India is still a poor country. Ram and Yadav (2021) in their analysis showed that around 150–199 million additional people will fall under poverty in 2021–2022; a majority of which are from rural areas. Further disaggregation revealed that the SC/ST, casual labour and the self-employed are the most impacted groups. Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha are the most affected states facing poverty ranging from 50% to 80% in the rural area and 40% to 70% in the urban area. Bhalla et al (2022) presented estimates of poverty and consumption inequality in India for each of the years 2004-5 through the pandemic year 2020-21 and found that extreme poverty was as low as 0.8 percent in the pre-pandemic year 2019, and food transfers were instrumental in ensuring that it remained at that low level in pandemic year 2020. Post-food subsidy inequality at 0.294 was also found to be very close to its lowest level 0.284 observed in 1993/94.

3. OBJECTIVES :

- i. To compare the global poverty levels with special reference to India.
- ii. To analyse spatial pattern of poverty in India.
- iii. To examine Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) for Indian States.

4. DATA AND METHODOLOGY:

The data for measuring poverty at the world level and further categorised into various regions: East Asia and Pacific, South Asia, Sub Saharan Africa, Latin America & Caribbean, Middle East & North America, Europe and Central Asia and other high-income countries is collected from World Bank for the period 1981-2021 at 2017 US \$ 2.15 PPP. The data on State and Union territories of poverty for 2022 (2021-22) is collected from NITI Aayog's Sustainable Development Goals dashboard and Reserve Bank of India's 'Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy'. Thereafter to carry on the analysis on Multidimensional poverty at the state level (total, urban and rural), the data is collected from National Multidimensional Poverty Index: Baseline Report based on NFHS-4 (2015-16) developed by NITI Aayog and released in 2021.

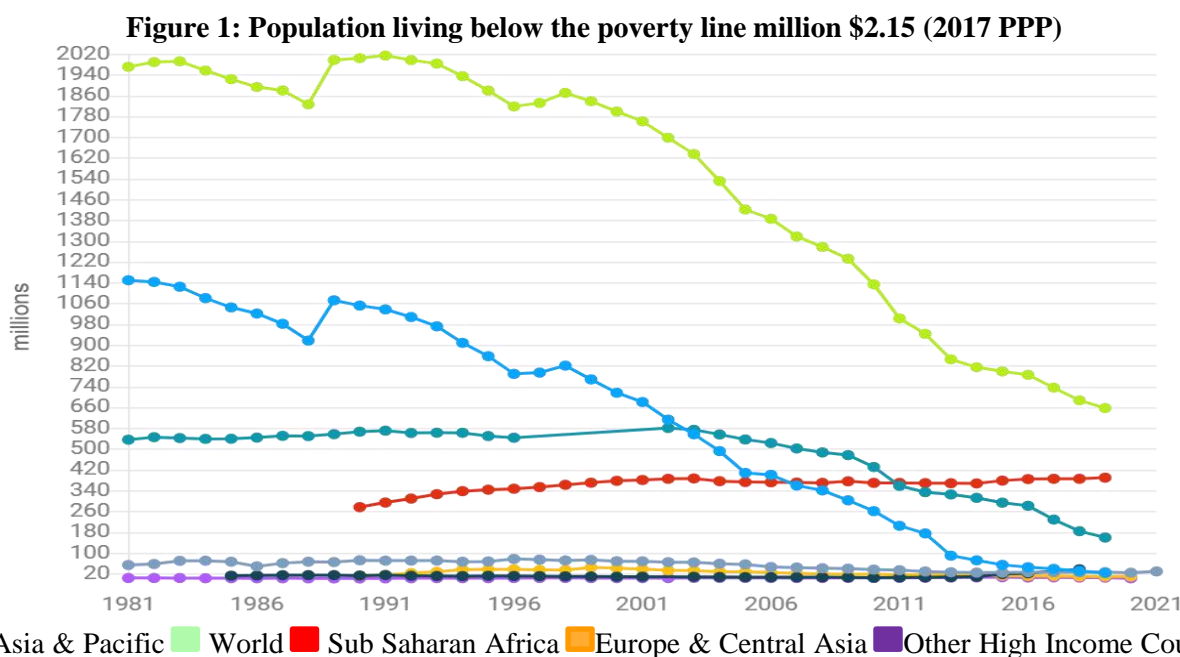
5. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS :

Poverty line is a cut-off point on the line of distribution which divides the population as poor and non-poor. There is a huge discrepancy in fixing the poverty line in the countries. The World Bank has now revised the international poverty line and fixed it at US\$ 2.15 per day. Section 5.1 discusses the poverty at the World level that is further categorised into different regions. The poverty particularly in South Asian countries is also discussed. Section 5.2 analysis the spatial pattern of poverty in India. Thereafter Multidimensional Poverty Index of India is discussed at the state level in India in section 5.3.

5.1. POPULATION LIVING IN POVERTY: A WORLD LEVEL ANALYSIS

Global poverty update from the World Bank revised the previously published global and regional estimates from 1981 to 2021 on March 2023. Regional poverty estimates are now reported up to 2021, covering the data over the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. The world level data on population living below the poverty line is presented in figure 1. The data shows that there is no change in the overall perceptions about global poverty trends and the regional distribution of poverty. It is still the case that global poverty has been falling since the 1990s, and at a slower rate since 2014.

Extreme poverty has been falling in all regions, except the Middle East and North Africa due to conflict and fragility (World Bank 2020). Roughly 60% of the world's extreme poor in 2019 lived in Sub-Saharan Africa alone, while 81% of the global poor at the poverty line of \$3.65 lived in Sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia.



Source: World Bank (2023), Poverty and Inequality Platform. pip.worldbank.org.

South Asia is the region covering the countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka. Table 1 presents poverty at \$2.15 (2017 PPP) for countries in South Asian region. South Asia is one of the largest and most important regions of the world that struggles with poverty due to enormous population,

Table 1: Population living below the poverty line million \$2.15 (2017 PPP): South Asian Countries

Year→ Country↓	1983	1987	1993	1995	2004	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Afghanistan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bangladesh	33.95	-	-	39.66	-	27.04	-	21.52	-	-	-
Bhutan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.01	-	-
India	419.6	412.7	441.4	-	453.5	283.4	247.8	242.4	181	151.8	138.5
Pakistan	-	70.2	-	-	34.48	18.24	10.78	-	-	10.84	-
Nepal	-	-	-	12.3	-	2.24	-	-	-	-	-
Maldives	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	0
Sri Lanka	-	-	-	2.15	-	-	-	0.27	-	-	0.21
South Asia	543.73	552.23	564.17	551.54	557.45	432.3	295.06	283.16	230.13	185.35	160.94

Source: World Bank (2023), Poverty and Inequality Platform.worldbank.org. Accessed on 2023-05-19

Note: The data for some countries is missing and marked (-). poor infrastructure, poor governance, etc. South Asia's growth prospects have comparatively declined due to tightening financial conditions, with large downside risks in most countries due to limited fiscal space and depleting reserves, underscoring the need to roll back market distortions introduced during the pandemic and address debilitating socioeconomic divides that constrain South Asia's potential. Elevated global and domestic food prices are contributing to greater food insecurity for South Asia's poor who spend a larger share of income on food and are thus trapped in vicious circle of poverty. However, the countries in the region are making all the efforts to overcome the poverty. Inflation in South Asia is set to fall to 8.9 percent in 2023, and to below 7 percent in 2024.

5.2. POPULATION LIVING IN POVERTY: AN ANALYSIS FOR INDIA

Table 2 provides the data on poverty levels in India from 1980 onwards. India is one of the world's fastest growing economy. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF), at the growth rate of 11.5%, India is going to be the fastest growing economy in 2023. The world's only country to register a double-digit growth in 2023. But the sudden outbreak of the novel coronavirus in early 2020 pushed numerous into poverty in India. It is estimated that 150-199 million additional people will fall into poverty at the end of 2023. Due to the pandemic, there were job cuts on a large-scale. The poverty rate of India is set to rise. According to the CMIE report, around 7 million jobs were lost in a year.

Table 2: Poverty levels in India: 1980-2020

Indicator Name→ Year↓	Poverty gap at \$3.65 a day (2017 PPP) (%)	Poverty headcount ratio at \$2.15 a day (2017 PPP) (% of population), poverty rate	population below poverty line \$2.15 a day (2017 PPP)
1983	41.2	56.3	419.62
1987	37.6	50.6	412.65
1993	35.7	47.6	441.36
2004	31.1	39.9	453.48
2009	27.1	32.9	402.18
2011	20.9	22.5	283.37
2015	19.1	18.7	247.78
2016	18.7	18.1	242.38
2017	15.6	13.4	181
2018	13.1	11.1	151.79
2019	12.1	10	138.48

Source: World Bank (2023), Poverty and Inequality Platform

The consumption expenditure has come down and the public spending on development was sluggish. So, poverty in India is expected to rise further. The world's largest economy also has one of its largest rates of child poverty.

India has more than halved its number of severely poor individuals, according to a World Bank working paper issued in the month of April 2023. Between 2011 and 2019, people earned less than \$1.9 per day on a purchasing power parity basis. The report says “Within a decade, India may lift the final 10% of its population out of extreme poverty”. Indian government’s spending on rural welfare schemes is helping in a big way to reduce national poverty. By 2030, the target of government is to eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere. According to the World Bank collection of development indicators, the Poverty gap for India is reported at 12.1% in 2019 down from 20% in 2011.

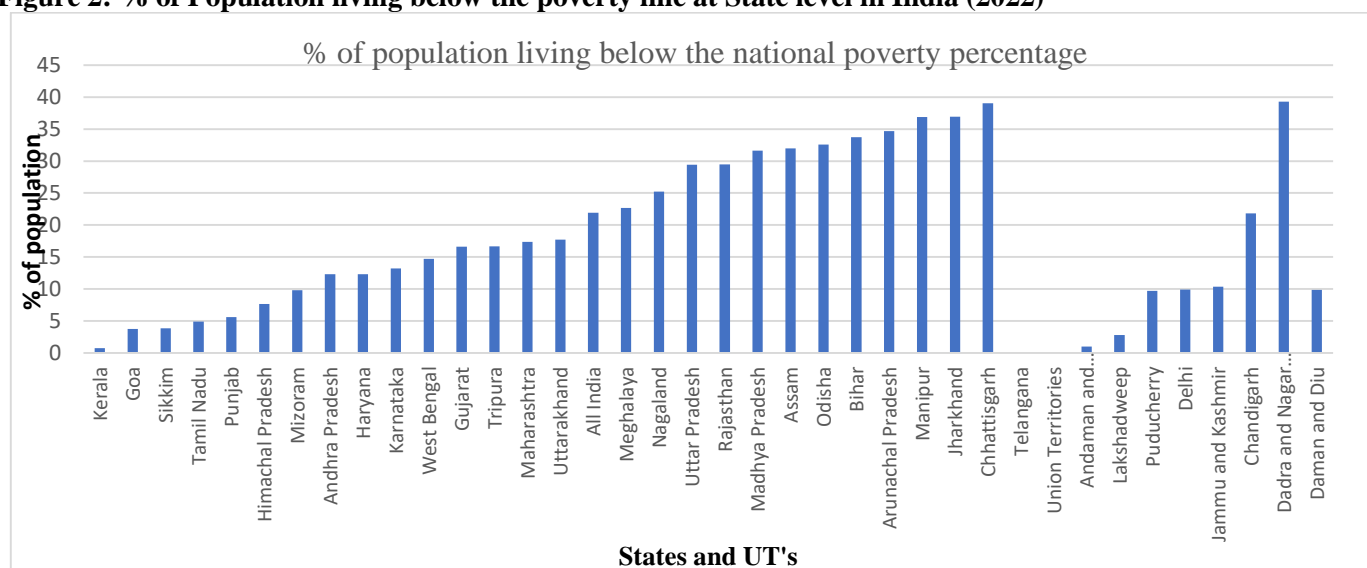
Table 3: Poverty Levels in India

Indicators		2016	%	2023	%
	Total population	1324120064		1422565376	
	People living in extreme poverty	74407017	6	44213761	3
Poverty Thresholds 1.90\$	in Rural Areas	70215044	8	41722828	5
	in Urban Ares	4191973	0.9	2490933	0.5
	males	34221691	5	20337793	3
	females	40185326	6	23875968	3

Source: World Poverty Clock, 2023. <https://worldpoverty.io/map>

According to World Poverty Clock (data presented in table 3), the number of people who are living in poverty recorded a decline to 44213761 or roughly 3% of the population. There are 20337793 males and 23875968 females impacted by poverty in India. Females are more affected than males.

Figure 2: % of Population living below the poverty line at State level in India (2022)



Source: NITI Aayog's Sustainable Development Goals dashboard; and Reserve Bank of India's 'Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy' 2022.

Figure 2 presents the list of states and union territories of India ranked according to poverty as of 2022 (2021-22) as hosted by NITI Aayog's Sustainable Development Goals dashboard and Reserve Bank of India's 'Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy'. The rank is calculated according to the percentage of people below poverty-line which is computed as per Tendulkar method on Mixed Reference Period (MRP). Kerala has recorded the lowest poverty rates at the state level. Around 15 states recorded the poverty levels below the all-India average.

5.3: MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX – STATE LEVEL

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is an international measure of acute multidimensional poverty, covering over 100 developing countries. NITI Aayog has been assigned the nodal responsibility for the global MPI in India. As part of this mandate, NITI Aayog is responsible for monitoring progress, reviewing States and Union Territories’ rankings and performance, preparing reform action plans, and constructing an indigenised national MPI in collaboration

Table 4 : Multidimensional Poverty Index – State Level

States/UT	Total		Rural		Urban	
	Headcount Ratio (%)	MPI	Headcount Ratio (%)	MPI	Headcount Ratio (%)	MPI
Andhra Pradesh	12.31	0.053	15.37	0.067	4.91	0.021
Arunachal Pradesh	24.27	0.115	29.23	0.139	8.15	0.035
Assam	32.67	0.156	36.16	0.174	9.97	0.044
Bihar	51.91	0.265	56.01	0.286	23.91	0.117
Chhattisgarh	29.91	0.134	35.73	0.16	10.2	0.043
Goa	3.76	0.015	4.44	0.17	3.34	0.014
Gujarat	18.6	0.084	27.4	0.124	6.59	0.029
Haryana	12.28	0.055	14.86	0.066	8.16	0.036
Himachal Pradesh	7.62	0.03	8.24	0.032	1.46	0.007
Jharkhand	42.16	0.202	50.93	0.246	15.26	0.067
Karnataka	13.16	0.056	19.01	0.081	5.07	0.021
Kerala	0.71	0.003	0.95	0.004	0.43	0.002
Madya Pradesh	36.65	0.173	45.96	0.219	13.82	0.062
Maharashtra	14.85	0.065	22.83	0.1	5.55	0.024
Manipur	17.89	0.08	22.95	0.103	9.9	0.042
Meghalaya	32.67	0.157	38.6	0.187	8.62	0.037
Mizoram	9.8	0.046	20.48	0.098	1.42	0.006
Nagaland	25.23	0.117	32.8	0.153	10.75	0.048
Odisha	29.35	0.136	32.66	0.152	12.33	0.057
Punjab	5.59	0.024	6.4	0.028	4.32	0.019
Rajasthan	29.46	0.14	35.22	0.168	11.52	0.052
Sikkim	3.82	0.016	4.25	0.018	2.8	0.012
Tamil Nadu	4.89	0.02	7.32	0.029	2.49	0.01
Telangana	13.74	0.059	20.35	0.088	5.1	0.022
Tripura	16.65	0.075	20.93	0.095	5.6	0.024
Uttar Pradesh	37.79	0.18	44.32	0.211	18.07	0.085
Uttarakhand	17.72	0.079	21.94	0.096	9.89	0.046
West Bengal	21.43	0.097	25.8	0.117	11.67	0.054
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	4.3	0.017	6.76	0.028	0.97	0.004
Chandigarh	5.97	0.026	18.56	0.089	5.45	0.023
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	27.36	0.122	44.67	0.2	4.89	0.02
Daman & Diu	6.82	0.03	5.19	0.022	7.41	0.033
Delhi	4.79	0.021	3.41	0.013	4.8	0.021
Jammu & Kashmir & Ladakh	12.58	0.055	16.39	0.073	3.5	0.015
Lakshadweep	1.82	0.007	1.16	0.005	2	0.007
Puducherry	1.72	0.007	3.33	0.012	0.99	0.004
India	25.01	0.118	32.75	0.155	8.81	0.04

Source: India Baseline Report National Multidimensional Poverty Index, Niti Aayog, 2021

With the publishing agencies, OPHI and UNDP. A national MPI enables the Centre and States to understand the factors hindering their growth and assist them in making interventions more effective and impactful. India's first-ever national MPI measure is based on utilizing 12 key indicators like nutrition, child and adolescent mortality, antenatal care, years of schooling, school attendance etc. which cover areas such as health and nutrition, education, and standard of living. The data on Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is reported in table 4. The National MPI score of India is 0.118. In Urban areas, the MPI score is 0.08 and rural it is 0.155. Kerala has turn out to be the state with the lowest rate of poverty in India. As per the index, only 0.71 per cent population of Kerala is poor. Kottayam of Kerala is the only district in India without poverty. This district has registered a zero in the recently released poverty index. States like Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh have registered the highest poverty rate across India. These states have emerged as

the 'poorest states' in India. 51.91% of the population in Bihar classified as poor, followed by Jharkhand (42.16%) and Uttar Pradesh (37.79%).

6. CONCLUSION:

No matter how fast India's economy grows, poverty will remain as one of the country's biggest challenges. It is an ever-present problem that has endured throughout the country's history and many parts of the globe as well. This issue will continue to be a vital problem if some of the major challenges like health, nutrition, education, income inequalities, etc. continue to exist and the percentage of the population living below the poverty line remains so high. Though the declining trend in poverty is a good sign and a justification that there are some schemes that have been put in place to help alleviate poverty. But the fact also cannot be ignored that there is still a category of people who struggle due to lack of access to resources and opportunities. It is often difficult to identify the exact number of people who live in poverty in India because many live in remote areas and are not counted as part of the national census moreover there is no exact national level estimate to calculate poverty after 2011 census. Access to education and health services, democratic institutions, gender and income equality, clean water and the promotion of equal opportunities are some of the services that can contribute effectively to the alleviation of poverty and creation of a better future for all. What SDGs say is "no one should be left behind," therefore not only at the country level, the whole international community should work on this issue. The emphasis should however be more on the needs of developing countries. For this reason, SDGs should invest more in actions that aim at creating effective states, which can provide better living conditions to the people of developing countries, enabling them for having equal opportunities and a more decent life. The economies that are home to the poorest billions of people need to grow in order to substantially reduce the global poverty. Hence, there is a need for all the stakeholders i.e. government as well as private investors to come forward and contribute to achieve this Sustainable Development Goal.

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