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Poverty- An Economic Challenge before India

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ABSTRACT: India is a developing nation. Although its economy is growing, poverty is still a major challenge. However, poverty is on the decline in India. According to an International Monetary Fund paper, extreme poverty, defined by the World Bank as living on US\$1.9 or less in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, in India was as low as 0.8% in 2019 and the country managed to keep it at that level in 2020 despite the unprecedented COVID-19 outbreak.^{[1][2]} According to World Bank, extreme poverty has reduced by 12.3% between 2011 and 2019 from 22.5% in 2011 to 10.2% in 2019. A working paper of the bank said rural poverty declined from 26.3% in 2011 to 11.6% in 2019. The decline in urban areas was from 14.2% to 6.3% in the same period. The poverty level in rural and urban areas went down by 14.7 and 7.9 percentage points, respectively.^[3] According to United Nations Development Programme administrator Achim Steiner, India lifted 271 million people out of extreme poverty in a 10-year time period from 2005–2006 to 2015–2016. A 2020 study from the World Economic Forum found "Some 220 million Indians sustained on an expenditure level of less than Rs 32 / day—the poverty line for rural India—by the last headcount of the poor in India in 2013."^[4]

KEYWORDS: India, poverty, economic, challenge, rural, expenditure, monetary, outbreak, world, bank

I. INTRODUCTION

India determines its household poverty line by summing up the individual per capita poverty lines of the household members. This practice is similar to many developing countries, but different from developed countries such as the United States who adjusts their poverty line on an incremental basis per additional household member. For example, in the United States, the poverty line for a household with just one member was set at \$11,670 per year for 2014, while it was set at \$23,850 per year for a 4-member household (or \$5963 per person for the larger household).^[54] The rationale for the differences arise from the economic realities of each country. In India, households may include surviving grandparents, parents, and children. They typically do not incur any or significant rent expenses every month particularly in rural India, unlike housing in mostly urban developed economies. The cost of food and other essentials are shared within the household by its members in both cases. However, a larger portion of a monthly expenditure goes to food in poor households in developing countries,^[55] while housing, conveyance, and other essentials cost significantly more in developed economies.

For its current poverty rate measurements, India calculates two benchmarks. The first includes a basket of goods, including food items but excluding the implied value of home, value of any means of conveyance or the economic value of other essentials created, grown or used without a financial transaction, by the members of a household. The second poverty line benchmark adds rent value of residence as well as the cost of conveyance, but nothing else, to the first benchmark.^[56] This practice is similar to those used in developed countries for non-cash income equivalents and a poverty line basis.^{[57][58]}

Global Hunger Index (GHI) is an index that places a third of weight on proportion of the population that is estimated to be undernourished, a third on the estimated prevalence of low body weight to height ratio in children younger than five, and remaining third weight on the proportion of children dying before the age of five for any reason. According to 2011 GHI report, India has improved its performance by 22% in 20 years, from 30.4 to 23.7 over 1990 to 2011 period.^[104] However, its performance from 2001 to 2011 has shown little progress, with just 3% improvement. A sharp reduction in the percentage of underweight children has helped India improve its hunger record on the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2014. India now ranks 55 among 76 emerging economies. Between 2005 and 2014, the prevalence of underweight children under the age of five fell from 43.5% to 30.7%.^[105]

II. DISCUSSION

Since the 1950s, the Indian government and non-governmental organisations have initiated several programs to alleviate poverty, including subsidising food and other necessities, increased access to loans, improving agricultural



techniques and price supports, promoting education, and family planning. These measures have helped eliminate famines, cut absolute poverty levels by more than half, and reduced illiteracy and malnutrition.

Although the Indian economy has grown steadily over the last two decades, its growth has been uneven when comparing social groups, economic groups, geographic regions, and rural and urban areas.^{[109][110]} For the year 2015–16, the GSDP growth rates of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh was higher than Maharashtra, Odisha or Punjab.^[111] Though GDP growth rate matters a lot economically, the debate is moving towards another consensus in India, where unhealthy infatuation with GDP growth matters less and holistic development or all-inclusive growth matters more.^[112] While India may well be on the path to eradicating extreme poverty, it still lags well behind in other important development indicators, even in comparison to some of its neighbouring countries, especially in regard to health and education.^[113]

Despite significant economic progress, one quarter of the nation's population earns less than the government-specified poverty threshold of ₹32 per day (approximately US\$ 0.6).^[114]

According to the 2001 census, 35.5% of Indian households used banking services, 35.1% owned a radio or transistor, 31.6% a television, 9.1% a phone, 43.7% a bicycle, 11.7% a scooter, motorcycle or a moped, and 2.5% a car, jeep or van; 34.5% of the households had none of these assets.^[115] As part of creating the capacity to give access to individuals who are still outside the scope of financial services, Confederation of Indian Industry's president Sanjiv Bajaj called for additional new banks and non-banking financial companies.^[116]

According to Department of Telecommunications of India, the phone density reached 73.34% by December 2012 and as an annual growth decreased by –4.58%.^[117] This tallies with the fact that a family of four with an annual income of ₹137,000 (US\$1,700) could afford some of these luxury items.

The World Bank's Global Monitoring Report for 2014–15 on the Millennium Development Goals says India has been the biggest contributor to poverty reduction between 2008 and 2011, with around 140 million or so lifted out of absolute poverty.^[118] Since the early 1950s, the Indian government has initiated various schemes to help the poor attain self-sufficiency in food production. A few examples of these initiatives include ration cards and price controls over the supply of basic commodities, particularly food at controlled prices, available throughout the country. These efforts prevented famines, but did little to eliminate or reduce poverty in rural or urban areas between 1950 and 1980.^[119]

India's rapid economic growth rate since 1991 is one of the main reasons for a record decline in poverty.^{[118][119][120]} Another reason proposed is India's launch of social welfare programs such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the Midday Meal Scheme in government schools.^[121] In a 2012 study, Klonner and Oldiges, concluded that MGNREGA helps reduce rural poverty gap (intensity of rural poverty) and seasonal poverty, but not overall poverty.^{[122][123]} However, there is a disturbing side, as deprivation has tended to increase, and that too among the most deprived sections. According to the latest statistics published by the Census of India, among scheduled tribes, 44.7% of people were farmers working on their own land in 2001; however, this number came down to 34.5% in 2011. Among scheduled castes, this number declined from 20% to 14.8% during the same period. This data is corroborated by other data from the census, which also says that the number of people who were working on others' land (landless laborers), increased from 36.9% in 2001 to 44.4% among scheduled castes SC and from 45.6% to 45.9% among scheduled tribes.^[124]

India has achieved annual growth exceeding 7 percent over the last 15 years and continues to pull millions of people out of poverty, according to the World Bank. The country has halved its poverty rate over the past three decades and has seen strong improvements in most human development outcomes, a report by the international financial institution has found. Growth is expected to continue and the elimination of extreme poverty in the next decade is within reach, said the bank, which warned that the country's development trajectory faces considerable challenges.^[125]

III. RESULTS

This is a 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'.^{[1][2]} 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).^{[3][4]}



State/UT	State/UT specific poverty line		% of population living below the national poverty percentage
	Rural (Rs)	Urban (Rs)	
States			
Goa	1090	1134	3.76
Kerala	1018	987	0.71
Himachal Pradesh	913	1064	7.62
Sikkim	930	1226	3.82
Punjab	1054	1155	5.59
Andhra Pradesh	860	1009	12.3
Haryana	1015	1169	12.3
Uttarakhand	880	1082	17.72
Tamil Nadu	880	937	4.89
Meghalaya	888	1154	32.67
Tripura	798	920	16.65
Rajasthan	905	1002	29.46
Maharashtra	967	1126	17.35
Gujarat	932	1152	16.63
Nagaland	1270	1302	25.23
West Bengal	1783	2381	14.88
Mizoram	1066	1155	9.80
Karnataka	902	1089	13.2
All India	816	1000	21.92
Uttar Pradesh	768	941	29.43
Madhya Pradesh	771	897	31.65
Assam	828	1008	31.98
Odisha	695	861	32.59
Bihar	778	923	33.74
Arunachal Pradesh	930	1060	34.67
Manipur	1118	1170	36.89
Jharkhand	748	974	36.96
Chhattisgarh	738	849	39.93
Telangana	—	—	—
Union Territories			
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	—	—	1



State/UT	State/UT specific poverty line		% of population living below the national poverty percentage
	Rural (Rs)	Urban (Rs)	
Lakshadweep	—	—	2.77
Puducherry	1301	1309	9.69
Delhi	1145	1134	9.91
Jammu and Kashmir	891	988	10.35
Chandigarh	—	—	21.81
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	—	—	39.31
Daman and Diu	—	—	9.86

IV. CONCLUSIONS

One of the major causes for malnutrition in India is economic inequality. Due to the low economic status of some parts of the population, their diet often lacks in both quality and quantity. Women who are malnourished are less likely to have healthy babies. Nutrition deficiencies inflict long-term damage to both individuals and society. Compared with their better-fed peers, nutrition-deficient individuals are more likely to have infectious diseases such as pneumonia and tuberculosis, which lead to a higher mortality rate. Besides, nutrition-deficient individuals are less productive at work. Low productivity not only gives them low pay that traps them in a vicious circle of under-nutrition,^[2] but also brings inefficiency to the society, especially in India where labor is a major input factor for economic production.^[3] On the other hand, over-nutrition also has severe consequences. In India national obesity rates in 2010 were 14% for women and 18% for men with some urban areas having rates as high as 40%.^[4] Obesity causes several non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers and chronic respiratory diseases.^[2]

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