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# THE MULTIFACETED DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY IN ASIA: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS



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**Abstract:** Poverty remains a critical global issue, disproportionately affecting countries in the Global South. This multifaceted phenomenon has wide-ranging impacts on health, education, and economic development. Despite numerous international efforts to mitigate poverty, the challenge persists, necessitating a deeper understanding of its root causes, current state, and potential solutions. Poverty persists as a critical issue in Asia, affecting 7.3% of the population living below the international poverty line. This study examines the causes, impacts, and strategies to address poverty, focusing on regional disparities across South, Southeast, and East Asia. Using statistical data and case studies, the findings highlight socio-economic challenges and propose interventions for sustainable development.

**Key words:** economy, increasing employment, reducing unemployment, poverty level, improving the welfare of the population.

## INTRODUCTION

The World Bank uses three different poverty lines, with \$3.65 per person a day thought to be more relevant to lower-middle-income countries, while the \$6.85 per person per day is generally used for populations in upper-middle-income countries. According to these categories, around 1.7 billion people (21.4 percent) or 3.5 billion people (43.6 percent) are estimated to be living in poverty in 2024, respectively. Although the share of people under \$6.85 per day has declined since the 1990s, the actual number of people living under these circumstances has remained fairly similar due to population growth.

Asia has made significant strides in poverty reduction, yet millions remain trapped in poverty due to systemic inequality, gender disparities, and climate-related vulnerabilities [9]. For example, South Asia hosts nearly 30% of the global extreme poor. This study aims to explore the causes, consequences, and solutions for poverty in Asia.

The main experts warn that if economic growth continues to remain slow and inequality is not tackled, the World Bank [22] global goal of a maximum of only three percent of people living in extreme poverty will not be reached for decades. The report's key message is that while aiming to reduce global poverty and to increase shared prosperity, it is crucial to take environmental costs into account.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

The poverty among population is a rather widely studied area for the economy. The research presented in the article is based on the theoretical and methodological foundations of the problem of increasing the standard of living of the population, which have been repeatedly studied by both domestic and foreign authors. The earliest studies concerning issues of social production and welfare, the way and standard of living are noted in the theoretical approaches developed by prominent scientists A. Smith, A. Marshall, V. Pareto, A. Pigou and others. In Uzbekistan, the works of Academician K.Kh. Abdurakhmanov [1], N.K. Zokirova [2], G.K. Abdurakhmanova, T.B. Gayibnazarov, S.P. Kurbanov [3], B.B. Berkinov [4], Sh.D. Kudbiev [5] and others [10] are devoted to the modern problems of reducing poverty and raising the standard of living of the population.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis and qualitative case studies. Quantitative data were sourced from the World Bank and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) reports, focusing on metrics such as GDP per capita, Human Development Index (HDI), and poverty headcount ratio. Qualitative data were collected through interviews and surveys with policymakers, NGO workers, and individuals experiencing poverty in selected countries, including India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Afghanistan and the Philippines.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In 86 countries, covering around 6 billion people, data from one or several periods have been harmonized to examine how poverty has evolved. Of these countries, 76 experienced a statistically significant absolute reduction in global MPI value over at least one-time period (74 countries reduced the incidence of poverty), and 20 experienced a statistically significant reduction across at least two time periods.

The Kingdom of Eswatini, Nepal, the Philippines and the United Republic of Tanzania experienced a significant reduction in MPI value and incidence of poverty over three time periods. Among the 10 countries with the fastest annualized absolute reduction in MPI value, 7 are in Sub-Saharan Africa (Sierra Leone, 2013/2017; Togo, 2013/2014–2017; the Kingdom of Eswatini, 2006/2007–2010; Ethiopia, 2016–2019; Liberia, 2007–2013; Guinea, 2012–2016; and Mali, 2015/2018), 2 are in East Asia and the Pacific (Timor-Leste, 2009/2010–2016) and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (2011/2012–2017) and 1 is in South Asia (Nepal, 2006–2011). Kyrgyzstan (2005/2006/2018), North Macedonia (2005/2006–2018/2019) and Serbia (2010–2019) had the fastest annualized reduction relative to their starting MPI value [6,7].

Of the 17 countries with trend data ending in 2021/2022 or later, 7 had no significant poverty reduction, 1 (Afghanistan) had a significant increase in poverty, and only 9 experienced a significant reduction in MPI value. Cambodia (2014–2021/2022) and Benin (2017/2018–2021/22) had the fastest reductions in MPI values and in incidence of poverty: from 66.0 percent to 55.9 percent in Benin (figure 1).

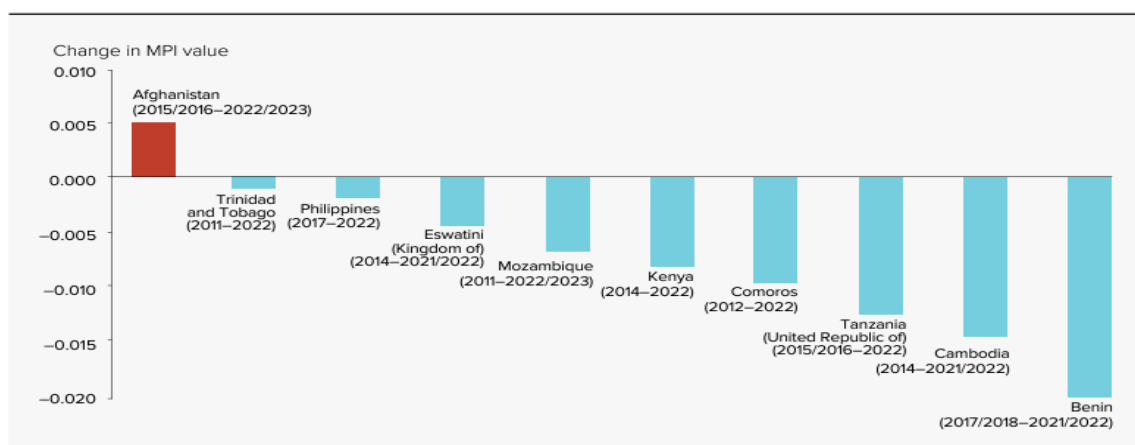


Figure 1. Ten countries with recent data experienced a statistically significant annualized absolute change in Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) value

Source: World Bank

Six of the nine are in Sub-Saharan Africa, two are in East Asia and the Pacific and one is in Latin America and the Caribbean. In Afghanistan (2015/2016–2022/2023) poverty increased significantly, and an additional 5.3 million Afghans became poor [8]. More data are required before drawing any conclusions about post-COVID-19 pandemic trends.

Nearly 40 percent of the 1.1 billion poor people (455 million) live in countries experiencing conflict, according to one or more of the three widely used definitions. That includes 218 million people living in countries at war, 335 million living in fragile or conflict-affected situations and 375 million living in very low or low peace contexts. Some 289 million (25.1 percent) experience two or more of these three conditions, while 184 million (16.0 percent) experience all three. While 10.0 percent of the global population live in countries affected by war, 19.0 percent (218 million) of the world's poor population is living in war-affected countries based on the UCDP dataset for the year of the survey used in the global MPI [14]. These numbers indicate that the proportion of poor people is disproportionately higher in conflict-affected states.

Asia, home to over 4.7 billion people, has made significant progress in poverty reduction over the past two decades. Countries like China and India have lifted millions out of poverty; however, challenges persist in regions like South Asia, where 30% of the global extreme poor reside. Factors such as rapid urbanization, unequal resource distribution, and climate vulnerability exacerbate poverty (figure 2).

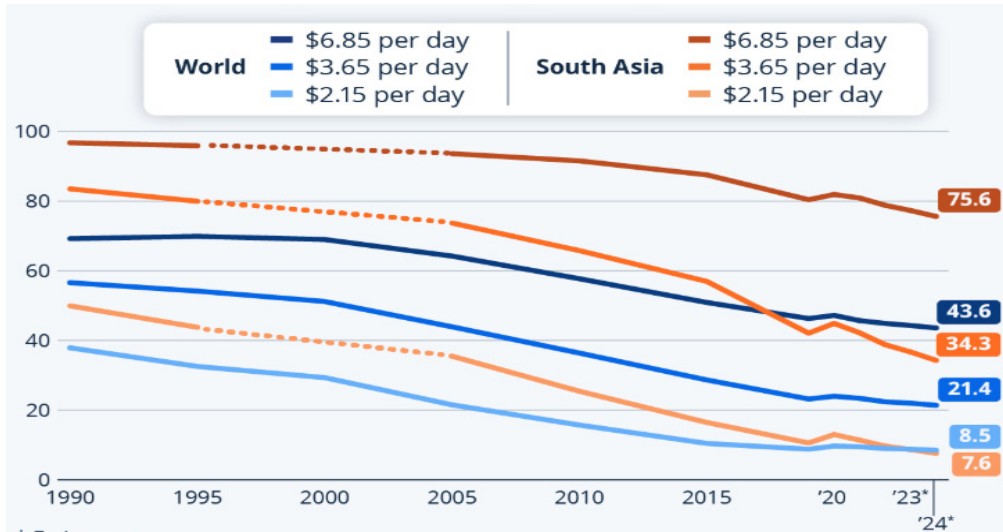


Figure 2. Share of population living in poverty worldwide and in South Asia, by the following poverty lines (in %) Source: World Bank

In South Asia, the share of people living in poverty increased more severely than the global average during the pandemic. The share of South Asians living under \$6.85 in 2024 is also well above the global average, at 75.6 percent versus the world's 43.6 percent. That's 1.48 billion people in South Asia, or roughly 42 percent of the global total (3.53 billion) [22].

Despite economic growth, 930 million Asians still earn less than \$3.65 per day (table 1). In South Asia, gender disparities limit women's economic participation, with female labor force participation at 23% in India. Natural disasters disproportionately affect the poor. For example, Bangladesh reports \$2 billion in annual economic losses due to flooding. 55% of low-income families in Asia lack access to affordable healthcare. Malnutrition remains prevalent, with 38% of children under five in South Asia stunted. Southeast Asia's poorest children are five times less likely to complete secondary education compared to wealthier peers (table 1).

Table 1 Poverty Headcount Ratios by Region (2024).

Region	Poverty Rate (% below \$2.15/day)	Population in Poverty (millions)
South Asia	12.4	500
Southeast Asia	6.8	140
East Asia	1.2	60
Central Asia	4.5	15

Source: World Bank

Data of World Bank [22] has shown that 19.0 percent (218 million) of the world's poor people live in countries affected by war and that 40 percent (455 million) of the world's poor people live in countries experiencing conflict, fragility and low peace. War-affected countries have a significantly higher incidence of poverty (34.8 percent) than nonconflict-affected countries (10.9 percent). The Global Peace Index further highlights that over half of the population lives in poverty in very low peace contexts compared with 15.1 percent in more peaceful countries [21]. Conflict exacerbates deprivation across multiple dimensions, including access to essential services such as nutrition, electricity, water and sanitation. Poverty reduction efforts are often stalled or reversed in conflict-affected areas, as evidenced by rising poverty in countries such as Afghanistan. Additionally, the challenges of data collection in conflict zones likely lead to an underestimation of the true extent of multidimensional poverty in these regions.

Afghanistan has experienced severe civil conflict since the late 1970s, culminating with the takeover by the Taliban as the de facto authorities in August 2021. The two surveys from 2015/2016 and 2022/2023 provide the opportunity to use harmonized trend data and explore the evolution of multidimensional poverty as the conflict intensified for most of the 2015–2023 period. From 2015 to 2019 there was a steady increase in conflict-related deaths, 1 from nearly 18,000 to slightly more than 30,000.

In 2020 conflict-related deaths fell to about 21,000. However, 2021 saw a surge to around 36,000 deaths. The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 marked a watershed, with conflict-related deaths falling to 1,600 in 2022 and 335 in 2023. Significant increase in Afghanistan's global Multidimensional Poverty Index value over time [16].

From 2015/2016 to 2022/2023 poverty rose by more than 5.2 percentage points, with 5.3 million additional people—1 in 20 Afghans—falling into multidimensional poverty (figure 3). The incidence of poverty increased by 5.2 percentage points between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023, and the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) value increased sharply. This analysis is hampered by the lack of nutrition data in the 2015/2016 Demographic and Health Survey (nutrition was a visible deprivation in 2022/2023) and the lack of cooking fuel data in 2022/2023. So, the change in harmonized MPI value over time for Afghanistan is based on eight indicators and as such may understate the level and change in poverty [19]. To be precise, the incidence of poverty in Afghanistan was 64.9 percent in 2022/2023, but when the nutrition indicator is dropped to assess trends, the value falls to 52.2 percent. Despite these limits, the results make important trends visible (figure 3)

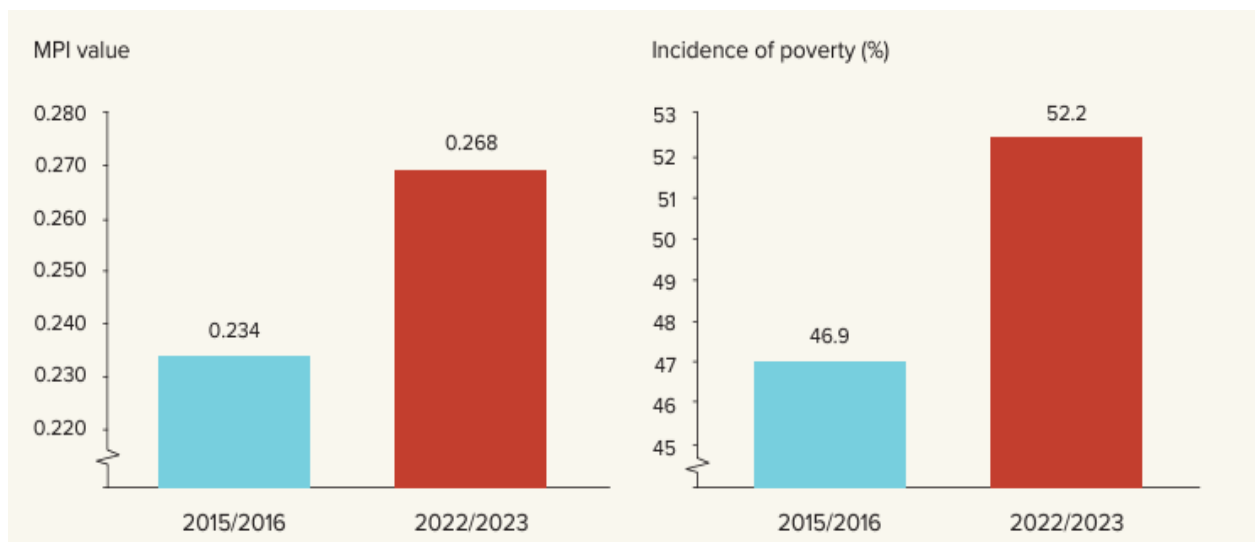


Figure 3. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) value and the incidence of poverty increased in Afghanistan between the two survey periods

Across 34 provinces only the 2 poorest – Urozgan and Nooristan – had a significant reduction in MPI value from 2015/2016 to 2022/2023, while 9 (Baghlan, Farah, Faryab, Ghor, Helmand, Kapisa, Paktika, Samangan and Zabul<sup>2</sup>) had significant increase and the rest had no significant change. Poverty trends in Afghanistan during this period must be analysed alongside large migration and population movements – for example, the populations of Helmand and Urozgan more than doubled [20].

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Poverty in developing countries is a pervasive issue with deep-rooted causes that require comprehensive and context-specific strategies for alleviation. Addressing the structural determinants of poverty, such as corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and social inequality, is crucial. International cooperation, coupled with robust domestic policies, can significantly contribute to poverty reduction. Future research should focus on evaluating the long-term impact of various poverty alleviation programs and exploring innovative solutions tailored to the unique challenges faced by different countries.

Asia, home to over 4.7 billion people, has made significant progress in poverty reduction over the past two decades. Countries like China and India have lifted millions out of poverty; however, challenges persist in regions like South Asia, where 30% of the global extreme poor reside. Factors such as rapid urbanization, unequal resource distribution, and climate vulnerability exacerbate poverty. Asia's progress in reducing poverty is commendable, yet challenges remain in addressing persistent inequalities and vulnerabilities. By adopting

inclusive economic policies, expanding social protection, and building resilience against climate risks, Asia can accelerate its journey toward poverty eradication and sustainable development.

The results highlight the complex interplay between economic, social, and environmental factors in perpetuating poverty in Asia. While rapid urbanization has created opportunities, it has also exacerbated inequalities. Social protection programs and inclusive policies have demonstrated significant impact in reducing poverty rates.

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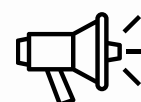
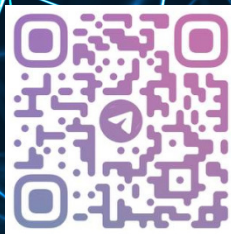
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