Poverty Eradication in India: A Study with Special Reference on SDG-1

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ABSTRACT

The term "poverty" means the state of being extremely poor or the state of being inferior in terms of quality. It is not about having enough money to meet the physiological needs of an individual but it is much more than what was understood. The World Bank describes poverty as hunger, lack of shelter, being uneducated and sick, not having a job or basic security, and being afraid for the future. On 25th September, 2015, 193 member countries assembled together at the UNs General Assembly to take an oath to transform the world into a better place to live and to ensure that development takes place in such a way that natural resources are sustained and passed on to future generations unimpaired by means of adopting Agenda 2030. The United Nations has listed a total of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the first goal is to eradicate poverty in all its forms. This paper seeks to find out whether India is moving towards poverty eradication by providing basic needs to the people, proper health care facilities, proper education, job security, and growth, ensuring significant mobilisation of resources from different sectors and implementing those factors within 2030 as per UNs Agenda. In this paper, the study has been conducted in a descriptive manner and the data has been gathered from different secondary sources. The results also highlight how India is moving towards poverty eradication by following SDG 1.

Keywords: *Poverty; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); SDGs Agenda 2030*

Introduction

"Extreme poverty anywhere is a threat to human security everywhere".

-Kofi Annan, Seventh Secretary General of the United Nations

Sustainable Development has become the "fuzz word" of both the academic and business worlds. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a fitting framework that calls attention to the challenges to a sustainable future and organises individual and collective responses. The SDGs are a set of 17 goals that have been adopted by 193 member countries at the historical summit organised by the United Nations held in New York on September 25, 2015. The global community marked a paradigm shift in direction from the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). India, home to one-sixth of all humanity, is cognizant of its role and responsibility in working towards a sustainable future for the planet and all of its life. It is usually described as development wherein needs of the current generation are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The Sustainable Development Goals are a universal agenda that applies to all countries. At the conference held at the

headquarters of the United Nations, all the member countries took an oath to transform the mother earth into a better place to live by adopting Agenda 2030, where they decided to implement each and every goal (17 goals) in the best way possible so that sustainability and equitable growth can be achieved by minimizing the adverse impact of climate change.

There are 17 SDGs which are as follows (UNDP, 2023):

(1) No Poverty; (2) Zero Hunger; (3) Good Health and Well Being; (4) Quality Education; (5) Gender Equality; (6) Clean Water and Sanitation; (7) Affordable and Clean Energy; (8) Decent Work and Economic Growth; (9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; (10) Reducing Inequality; (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities; (12) Responsible Consumption and Production; (13) Climate Change; (14) Life Below Water; (15) Life on Land; (16) Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions; (17) Partnerships for the Goals.

UNs SDG 1 defines the ending of poverty in all its forms. For any developing country with a mammoth population, like India, poverty eradication is one of the difficult tasks that the government has faced throughout the years. The Government of India also introduced a task force, known as NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India) (previously, The Planning Commission) whose tasks are to look after the objectives set by the UN's SDG and to utilise and implement those objectives into actions within the country in the fullest way possible so that the SDGs Agenda 2030 can be achieved within due course. According to the latest report of the World Bank (2023), every one in four people in India is living on less than $ 1.25 a day. It also shows that nearly 1.1 billion fewer people are living in extreme poverty than in 1990. Children, too, are victims of extreme global poverty. Poverty does not only signify money or income, it also talks about lack of access to resources, lack of physiological needs, education, unemployment, hunger, growth, ill health, clean drinking water, technological advancement and so on.

India is implementing a comprehensive development strategy to eradicate poverty. The main goal of India for SDG 1 is to reduce by at least half the proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions by 2030. To reduce poverty, India is trying to maintain a high growth rate for job creation while also facing layoffs in various sectors of the economy. For achieving SDG 1, NITI Aayog has selected five national-level indicators to measure performance towards poverty eradication. The target is to reduce poverty by 2030, and in doing so, India adopts different poverty alleviation policies and programs that focus on the economic growth of the nation (Gera *et al.*, 2018).

Literature Review

Many studies have been conducted worldwide over the years, but in India, the number of studies has been limited so far. Some of the important studies in this area are summarised below:

Griggs *et al.* (2013) mention how humans in the recent era have focused only on poverty alleviation without considering much about environmental degradation. Pradhan *et al.* (2017) found that the indicators are not independent of each other and show positive

and negative correlations, which they termed trade-offs and synergies, respectively. Das, Sharma and Babu (2018) pointed out that, with regards to "No Hunger", the performance of southern states is far better than their counterparts in the area of food security and nutrition. David (2018) identified challenges in India's implementation of SDGs, such as defining indicators, monitoring and ownership, measuring progress, and financing SDGs. Dhar (2018) focused on the economic empowerment of women and ending violence against women under the SDG framework. Roy and Pramanick (2019) conducted their research on the basis of "Clean Water and Sanitation" and took 28 parameters, which have been categorised into two categories of social and biophysical. The study also shows an interrelationship with hunger and poverty and concludes that a positive increase in sanitation indicators would improve water and sanitation related diseases. Choudhuri (2019) found a lacuna in linking the government's plan for clean energy and sanitation. Parvez and Agarwal (2019) studied the sustainability of Higher Education Institutes (HEI) in India. After considering the parameters and indicators of "STARS" and "UI Green Metric WUR" and found that around 50% parameters of the above benchmarks were not complied. The study also specifies the need for reporting specific rating parameters for HEI's in India.

There are some studies in India based on poverty alleviation, but related to SDG 1 and poverty alleviation, there are very few studies that focus on the need, current status, and progress towards achieving SDGs Agenda 2030 in India. This paper aims to bridge that gap.

Objectives of the Study

This paper seeks to dwell upon the following issues:

(a) To see whether social protection system throughout the country has been implemented properly to achieve SDGs Agenda 2030.
(b) To ensure significant mobilisation of resources for India as a developing economy.
(c) To implement different policies adopted by the Government of India and different poverty alleviation programmes to end poverty in all dimensions by 2030.

Methodology

This research paper is descriptive and exploratory in nature. It is based on the information and data that have been collected from secondary sources. It is an analytical study that is based on the information collected from newspaper articles, research journals, and governmental and non-governmental reports, such as the United Nations SDG Reports, India's SDX Index Reports, NITI Aayog, etc.

Results and Discussion

On 25th September, 2015, 193 member countries assembled together at the UNs General Assembly to take an oath to transform the world into a better place to live and to ensure that development takes place in such a way that natural resources are sustained and passed on to future generations unimpaired by means of adopting Agenda 2030. The Government of India, through different policy implementations, is trying to improve the socio-economic factors of the nation. Even in the health-care sector, India hit the worst during Covid 19 break-out in the second wave. Since then, the Indian Council of

Medical Research (ICMR) has been at the forefront of constantly evolving and trying to provide better solutions to every problem as the world is changing at a faster pace than ever before. They also join hands with Government's "Vision of Healthy India" for achieving the SDGs Agenda 2030 for Good Health and Well Being (SDG 3). The Indian Council of Medical Research also plans to re-align their research and development to become truly complementary with the national policies. For providing a social protection system throughout the country and to achieve the SDGs Agenda by 2030, the Government of India introduced different schemes, among which the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, also called Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY).

This scheme has been introduced for economically weaker sections of society who are in great need of treatment. It started functioning from 23rd September, 2018, aims to cover a mammoth 50 crore Indian citizens under this scheme. As per the latest report, approximately 19,000 hospitals were covered under this scheme, more than 10 crore e-cards have been issued, and more than 45 lakh beneficiaries have benefited from this scheme across the country. The Ayushman Bharat Yojana, later renamed Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, aimed to provide health care services in both the secondary and tertiary sectors cashless, so that the underprivileged or economically weaker section of people could get the treatment without much difficulty. The coverage includes 3 days of pre-hospitalization and 15 days of post-hospitalization as well as all other related expenses. It covers a coverage of Rs 5 lakh for every family per year, thereby helping the weaker section of the population get their treatment (NPI, 2018).

It has been noticed that, due to not having proper equipment for treatment, people often died without even being diagnosed with the disease beforehand. At the national level, this scheme has been operative, similarly various state government as well as Union Territories have launched their own personalized scheme to provide better health care facilities to all. Besides health, education, unemployment, safe drinking, and sanitation also play dominant roles in any country's poverty eradication. As per the reports published by SDG India Index 3.0, 2020–21 report, approximately 28.7% of the population has at least one member of the family covered under Health Insurance or a health scheme (be it Governmental or Private those who can afford it) (NPI, 2018). Even with the introduction of Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) in 2015, the Ministry of Finance provides life insurance as well as accidental coverage to the poorer or economically weaker sections of the population. For PMSBY, this scheme is specially designed for people involved in working in high-risk sectors, namely, mechanics, laborers, truck drivers, etc. For PMJJBY, it is a one-year life insurance coverage scheme that is renewable from year to year, and the premium amount is very nominal so that people can afford it (National Informatics Centre, n.d.). Even so, it is very easy to get those schemes, as several governmental as well as scheduled banks, including an insurance company, namely the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LICI), also administer them.

Due to the outbreak of Covid 19, India as well as the rest of the world were in the turbulence stage, and hence the goal to achieve the No Poverty Agenda has shaken a little. For every nation to prosper, education as well as employment are keys to success. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All) was an initiative taken by the Government of

India way back in the 86th Amendments of the Constitution of India to provide free education to every corner of the country for children up to 14 years of age. Although there have been numerous discussions and criticisms of the role of the government in this pandemic era, they supplied free food to the poorest section of the population, which helped mitigate the risk for the poor. As per the latest article published by the UN in a daily newspaper, India's poor face low inflation risk, i.e., it creates low impact. The study used distribution per capita household income for benchmark and cost of living scenarios at three income levels: $ 1.9 a day (World Bank Standard for absolute poverty), $ 3.2 and $ 5.5. For vulnerability to poverty, the analysis also used a threshold of $ 13 a day (United Nations, n.d.).

Table 1 shows a comparative analysis of the SDG India Index Baseline Report, 2018, SDG Index 2.0, 2019-20 and SDG Index 3.0, 2020-21, showing how much India has achieved state-wise as well as union territory-wise for goal attainment towards SDG 1 for poverty eradication in these years.

Table 1: Performance of States and UTs for Goal Attainment Towards SDG

Sr. No.	States/ UTs	Percentage of Population living below the National Poverty Line			Percentage of households of any usual member covered by a health scheme of health insurance			Persons provided employment as a percentage of persons who demanded employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)			Proportion of population (out of total eligible population) receiving social protection benefits under Maternity Benefit (%) [Note: Lately the scheme has been renamed as Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)]			SDG 1 Index Score		
		2017-18	2019-20	2020-21	2017-18	2019-20	2020-21	2017-18	2019-20	2020-21	2017-18	2019-20	2020-21	2017-18	2019-20	2020-21
1.	Andhra Pradesh	9.2	9.2	9.2	74.60	74.60	74.60	87.77	91.28	83.81	17.40	17.40	96.40	67	69	81
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	34.67	34.67	34.67	58.30	58.30	58.30	85.56	93.39	95.44	20.50	20.50	92.76	52	34	54
3.	Assam	31.98	31.98	31.98	10.40	10.40	10.40	87.10	87.30	86.11	66.10	66.10	95.32	53	48	51
4.	Bihar	33.74	33.74	33.74	12.30	12.30	12.30	75.63	77.25	78.60	53.90	53.90	87.97	45	33	32
5.	Chattisgarh	39.93	39.93	39.93	68.50	68.50	68.50	77.25	79.91	77.09	66.20	66.20	94.98	50	49	49
6.	Goa	5.09	5.09	5.09	15.90	15.90	15.90	98.15	87.23	97.39	7.40	7.40	93.96	62	53	83
7.	Gujarat	16.63	16.63	16.63	23.10	23.10	23.10	80.92	82.99	83.63	8.90	8.90	92.83	48	47	66
8.	Haryana	11.16	11.16	11.16	12.20	12.20	12.20	80.16	79.04	79.12	13.50	13.50	97.24	50	47	69
9.	Himachal Pradesh	8.06	8.06	8.06	25.80	25.70	25.70	91.12	91.60	90.30	13.10	13.10	95.86	60	60	80
10.	Jharkhand	36.96	36.96	36.96	13.30	13.30	13.30	70.34	75.38	80.62	41.60	41.60	89.69	37	28	36
11.	Karnataka	20.91	20.91	20.91	28.10	28.10	28.10	84.26	85.53	86.34	19.90	19.90	92.35	52	49	68
12.	Kerala	7.05	7.05	7.05	47.70	47.70	47.70	87.98	89.33	88.85	20.40	20.40	97.75	66	64	83
13.	Madhya Pradesh	31.65	31.65	31.65	17.70	17.70	17.70	79.68	78.06	79.27	61.10	61.10	95.86	44	40	44
14.	Maharashtra	17.35	17.35	17.35	15.00	15.00	15.00	86.40	86.10	84.29	8.70	8.70	92.98	47	47	66
15.	Manipur	36.89	36.89	36.89	3.60	3.60	3.60	96.46	95.45	97.06	26.20	26.20	87.84	44	42	60
16.	Meghalaya	11.87	11.87	11.87	34.60	34.60	34.60	97.30	97.85	97.95	28.00	28.00	96.61	68	68	77
17.	Mizoram	20.40	20.40	20.40	45.40	45.80	45.80	99.94	99.92	99.92	47.50	47.50	93.45	71	67	80
18.	Nagaland	18.88	18.88	18.88	6.10	6.10	6.10	98.91	95.08	98.96	29.70	29.70	91.30	59	56	73
19.	Odisha	32.59	32.59	32.59	47.70	47.70	47.70	84.76	85.80	85.51	72.60	72.60	Null	59	47	41
20.	Punjab	8.26	8.26	8.26	21.20	21.20	21.20	81.63	76.12	77.66	19.10	19.10	96.46	56	48	69
21.	Rajasthan	14.71	14.71	14.71	18.70	18.70	18.70	85.07	83.16	84.24	56.10	56.10	98.15	59	56	63
22.	Sikkim	8.19	8.19	8.19	30.30	30.30	30.30	94.16	93.07	91.30	29.40	29.40	92.17	64	65	80
23.	Tamil Nadu	11.28	11.28	11.28	64.10	64.00	64.00	98.83	94.07	94.44	29.50	29.50	88.42	76	72	86
24.	Telengana	Null	Null	Null	66.40	66.40	66.40	77.06	84.40	81.38	12.20	12.20	Null	52	52	68
25.	Tripura	14.05	14.05	14.05	58.10	58.10	58.10	94.38	95.68	96.38	32.60	32.60	86.58	71	70	82
26.	Uttar Pradesh	29.43	29.43	29.43	6.10	6.10	6.10	84.30	84.23	82.15	48.70	48.70	93.48	48	40	44
27.	Uttarakhand	11.26	11.26	11.26	19.50	19.50	19.50	90.10	90.37	90.02	49.40	49.40	89.02	65	64	74
28.	West Bengal	19.98	19.98	19.98	33.40	33.40	33.40	87.63	88.37	87.59	28.70	28.70	71.57	57	52	59
29.	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	1.00	1.00	1.00	5.70	5.70	5.70	92.46	84.82	82.96	1.40	1.40	96.73	57	48	71
30.	Chandigarh	21.81	21.81	21.81	21.30	21.30	21.30	Null	Null	Null	13.70	13.70	96.22	39	48	75

31.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	39.31	39.31	39.31	30.80	30.80	30.80	Null	Null	Null	2.60	2.60	94.94	21	33	65
32.	Daman and Diu	9.86	9.86	9.86	17.00	17.00	17.00	Null	Null	Null	19.30	19.30	90.21	58	58	
33.	Delhi	9.91	9.91	9.91	16.40	15.70	15.70	Null	Null	Null	7.90	7.90	96.50	30	54	81
34.	Jammu and Kashmir	10.35	10.35	10.35	4.20	4.20	4.20	88.79	87.52	84.32	54.00	54.00	96.69	61	58	69
35.	Ladakh	---	---	10.35	---	---	4.20	---	---	97.75	---	---	96.69	---	---	79
36.	Lakshadweep	2.77	2.77	2.77	3.40	2.90	2.90	56.13	91.20	91.85	17.50	17.50	26.41	43	56	61
37.	Puducherry	9.69	9.69	9.69	32.80	32.80	32.80	83.78	84.45	84.76	21.40	21.40	96.01	61	56	75
	India	21.92	21.92	21.92	28.70	28.70	28.70	84.75	85.26	84.44	36.40	36.40	91.38	54	50	60
	Target	10.95	10.95	10.96	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	98.95	100.00	100.00	100.00	100	100	100

Compiled by the researcher, Source: NITI Aayog (2018, 2019, 2021)
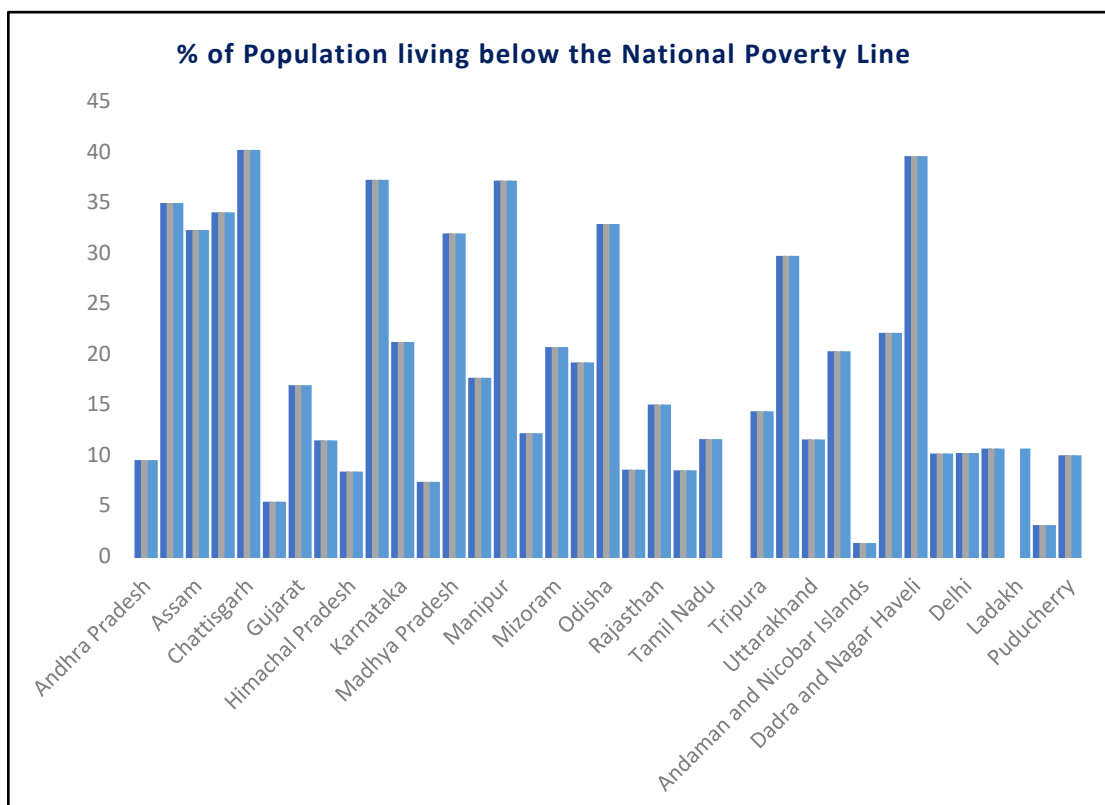
Source: Presentation made by the researcher based on Table 1

Figure 1: Percentage of Population Living below the National Poverty Line of Indian States and Union Territories

According to the Tendulkar Committee's (Planning Commission, 2013) estimates for measuring the poverty rate, the poverty rate of India fell by 8.1 % between 1993–94 and 2004–05, further reducing it to 15.3% between 2004–05 and 2011–12. In 2011–12, it was noticed that only 21.92% of the population of India was below the poverty line, but the target was to achieve it within 10.96%. Although it has been noticed that, among the states, Goa is leading the race with only 5.09% of the population below the poverty line, followed by Kerala (7.05%), Himachal Pradesh (8.06%), Sikkim (8.19%), Punjab (8.26%), and Andhra Pradesh (9.2%). In terms of UTs, Andaman and Nicobar Islands are leading with only 1% of the population below the poverty line, followed by Lakshadweep (2.77%), Daman & Diu (9.86%), and Delhi (9.91%). Ladakh as a UT is the new entrant in 2020–21, with only 10.35% below the poverty line.
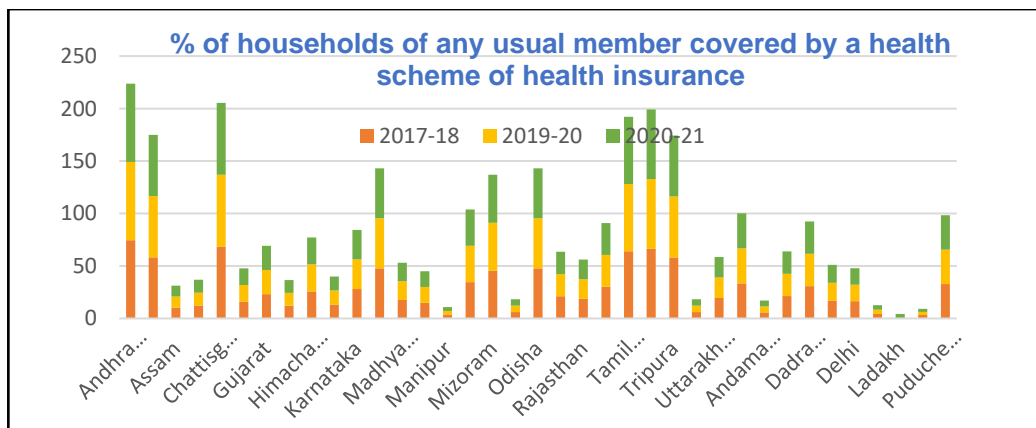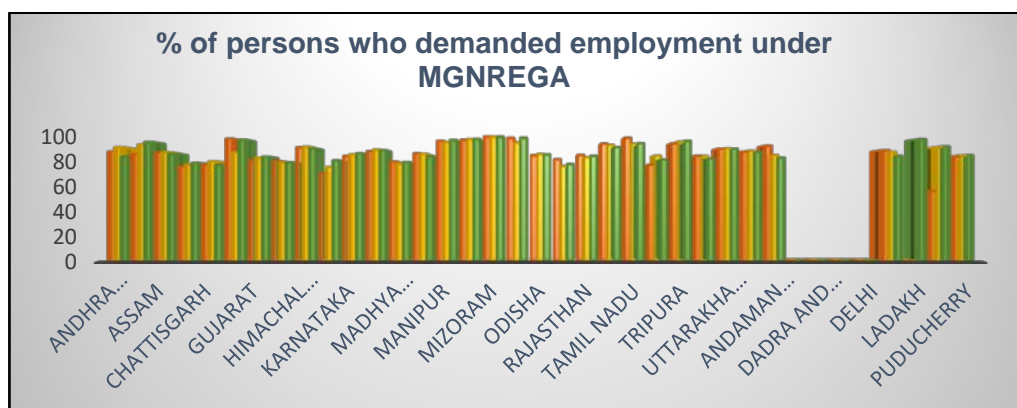
Source: Presentation made by the researcher based on Table 1

***Figure 2: Percentage of Households of any Usual Member Covered by a
Health Scheme of Health Insurance***

According to Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiatives (OPHI's) Global MPI Country Report on India 2020 based on the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS) Report, it has been found that nearly 270 million people have been lifted out of Multi-Dimensional Poverty i.e., approx. 27.9% (NITI Aayog, 2020). The target of India is to reduce its population by half, and it is expected that within a few years, if India follows this strict approach, they can achieve the target by 2030.

One of the main tasks for poverty eradication is providing health care facilities to all citizens. As discussed earlier, Governments (both Central and States) work in tandem to provide basic health-care facilities to all irrespective of their needs, i.e., providing health insurance to all households in India, whether urban or rural, by implementing various schemes throughout the nation. As per the SDG India Index report 3.0, it is found that at least 28.7% of households in India cover at least one member of a family with a health scheme or health insurance. After all these efforts, India is still lagging behind in achieving the target of 100%. But still, there is hope that it will be achieved in the near future.
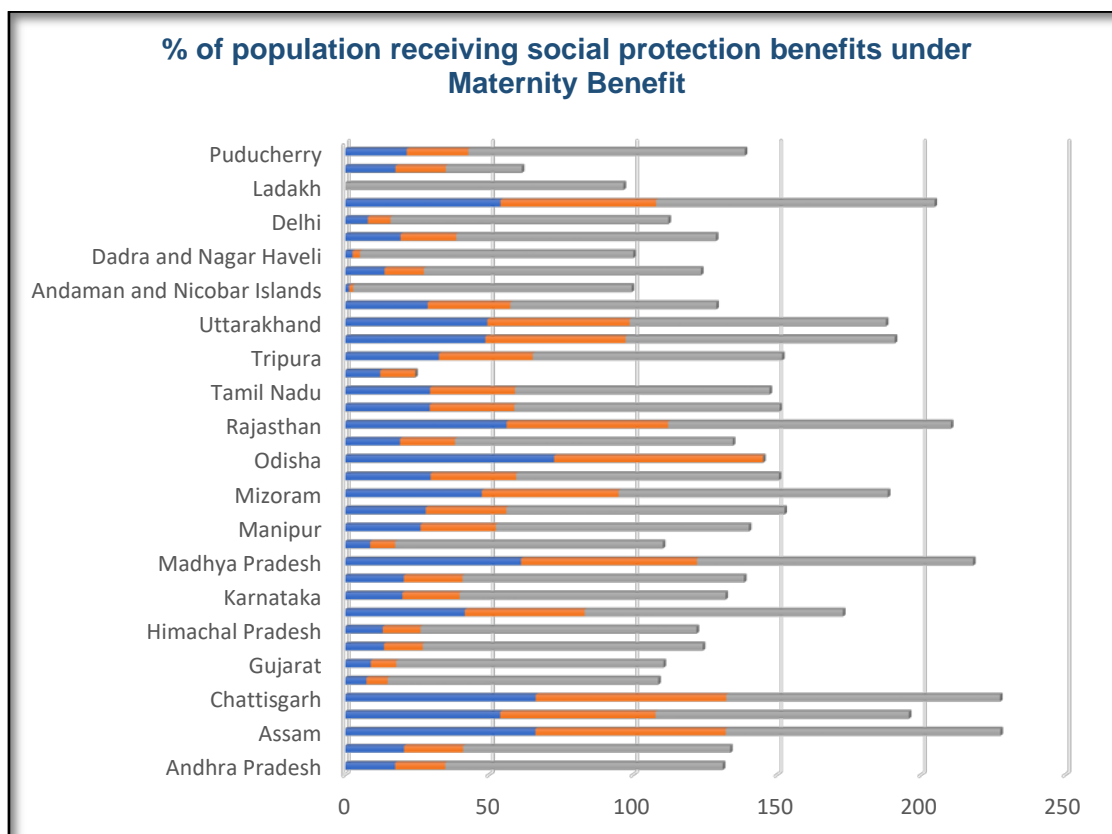

Source: Presentation made by the researcher based on Table 1

***Figure 3: Percentage of persons who demanded employment under Mahatma Gandhi National
Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)***

In terms of providing guaranteed employment opportunity, the Government of India introduced the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in 2005; later, it was

renamed in 2009 as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for providing 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every rural household whose adult member volunteers to do unskilled work (Ministry of Rural Development, 2023). Based on the above table reports, it has been seen that more or less every state and union territory has performed significantly well to reach the desired goals. For three consecutive years, Mizoram (99.92%) outperformed every state and Ladakh, and the new entrants in UT also performed fairly well (97.75%) than others. Similarly, other poverty alleviation programs are also provided by the government to meet the needs of society and the people at large.

Source: Presentation made by the researcher based on Table 1

Figure 4: Percentage of population receiving social protection benefits under Maternity Benefit

In terms of providing social benefit, another important aspect of eradicating poverty as per SDG 1 is to provide maternity benefit across the nation. The Government of India launched a maternity benefit program in 2010 named Indira Gandhi Maternity Benefit Program. Matritva Sahyog Yojana was later, in 2017, renamed Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The main focus of this scheme is to provide financial benefit in terms of conditional cash transfers for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or older for the first live birth. The scheme also provides partial wage compensation to those women who suffer wage loss during childbirth. This has become a pilot project for the Government and it started implementing almost all the states and UTs across various districts as well. Initially, this scheme provides an amount of Rs 6,000 in two different installments for child care. The eligible beneficiaries receive this amount under the Janani Suraksha

Yojana for institutional delivery. In terms of the reports from the above table, India is performing well enough in 2020–21 as compared to 2018, 2019–20. In 2018 and 2019–20, India achieved only 36.40% of its objective of achieving the desired goal of 100%. But in 2020–21, India outperformed and achieved 91.38% towards the goal of 100%. Still, the target is yet to be achieved in full swing or coverage, and India is on the verge of achieving it in its full capacity. Among the states and UTs, Rajasthan and Andaman and Nicobar Islands had the highest coverage in India, with 98.15% and 96.73% of eligible beneficiaries receiving maternity benefits, respectively.
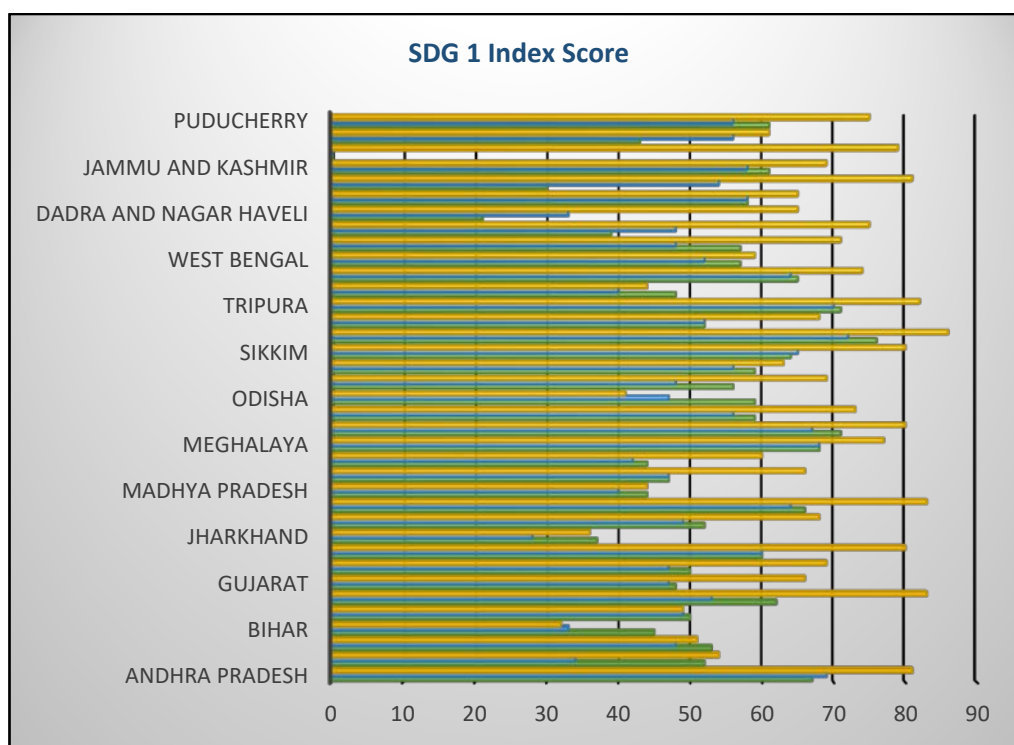
Source: Presentation made by the researcher based on Table 1

Figure 5: SDG 1 Index Score

The index score on the basis of SDG 1 No Poverty in different states of India has been measured on the basis of five national-level indicators that have been identified by the government of India, and out of these indicators, three out of seven SDG targets have been aimed at being fulfilled by 2030. The indicators have been selected based on the availability of data across the states and the UTs to ensure smooth comparability. This index score ranges between 32 and 86 for states and between 61 and 81 for UTs. The index score has been categorised under four heads: (a) Aspirants (having a score from 0 to 49); (b) Performer (having a score from 50-64); (c) Front Runner (having a score from 65 to 99) and (d) Achiever (Score of 100). Among the states, as per the 2020–21 report from the above table, Tamil Nadu is the Front Runner in the race with an 86 Index Score and in terms of UT, Delhi is the Front Runner bearing SDG 1 Index Score of 81. Overall, the SDG 1 Index Score value has also increased to 60 than that of 2019-20 (50) and 2018 (54), but still, it can be said that India is progressing towards poverty eradication slowly but steadily.

Conclusion

Poverty is a threat to humanity. Extreme poverty in India is declining. The extreme poverty rate fell before the pandemic. Although, a significant decline in poverty has been noticed in the urban sector rather than the rural.

India has achieved significant growth in the reduction of poverty in all its forms. One of the objectives of the UN as well as India is poverty eradication by 2030. There is still a long way to go to achieve the target, but it can be seen that India is progressing slowly but steadily. As a developing country with a huge population base, it is indeed a difficult task for the government to strictly adhere to the principles, rules, and nomenclatures to follow the protocol to achieve the goal, but out of all these restrictions, India is rapidly developing and slowing implementing various poverty alleviation programs to achieve the target.

Due to the outbreak of Covid 19 Pandemic, the whole system gets disrupted not only in the nation but also worldwide. But still, there is always hope that India will break the jinx and come out with a taste of success. By implementing various social protection schemes, employment opportunities, education, etc., it is noticed that India is trying to adopt the policies that the UN suggested, and core committees like NITI Aayog have been adhered to verify and to implement various goals of the SDGs. By no means can it be said that India has not tried to achieve the target, rather, they are prioritising these goals and strategically and systematically trying to implement them as much as possible. For a country like India, there will be barriers to effectively implementing the policies and functioning effectively. The title of this paper actually justifies the outcome that, India, the nation, is moving towards poverty eradication through the implementation of SDG 1.

Acknowledgement

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