Towards Achieving the SDG of Ending Poverty in South Asia: A Case Study of India and Pakistan

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Abstract

Ending poverty by 2030 in all its dimensions is indeed challenging. It is even more challenging for countries that remained off-the-track in the previous Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015. The reason behind it was two-fold: lack of will and the states' vulnerability to inter and intra-state conflicts. Both apply to India and Pakistan, the two largest and the most populous states in South Asia. Since their inception, the relationship between both states has never been smooth, resultantly, human security was compromised. In line with this thinking, this paper purposely takes India and Pakistan as a case study to highlight the state of poverty by monitoring progress made in the Millennium well as the Sustainable Development Goal of eradicating poverty so far. While examining, the paper argues that ending poverty by 2030 would remain a pipedream, unless both India and Pakistan prioritise non-traditional issues and put serious efforts into the global mission of poverty-free world.

Introduction

In September 2000, all the United Nations (UN) member states unanimously adopted the Millennium Declaration. This declaration set out eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved in a time span of fifteen years, i.e., by 2015. These MDGs were primarily a global commitment to the following:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2. Achieve universal primary education;
3. Promote gender equality;
4. Reduce child mortality;
5. Improve maternal health;
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases;
7. Ensure environmental sustainability; and
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

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According to the 2105 UN report on MDGs, this global effort produced tangible outcomes and overall became a historically successful anti-poverty movement.[1] Nevertheless, the report also admitted that income inequalities persisted, which continued to cause uneven progress in lifting people out of extreme poverty and other related goals. The co-joined target of halving hunger was also narrowly missed. Similarly, the goal of universal primary education was missed as well. The target of gender parity is yet to be met. There was tangible progress in the field of child mortality and maternal health, though, both remained below the target. The number of new HIV/AIDS patients fell by 40 percent, but the target of halting and reversing its spread could not be achieved. Moreover, around 663 million people in the world are still deprived of safe drinking water.[2]

The MDG initiative, despite its patchy progress, established that development through international commitment under the UN is indispensable. The UN helped with setting up a Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund. While keeping in mind the strengths and weaknesses of the fifteen years-long journey to meet the MDG goals, a new post-2015 agenda was designed in the shape of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030. These goals reiterated, in a more holistic and enthusiastic way, a global commitment to the following:

1. End poverty in all its dimensions;
2. End hunger by achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting agriculture;
3. Ensure good health and wellbeing for all ages;
4. Ensure quality education for all;
5. Achieve gender equality by empowering women and girls;
6. Ensure access to clean water and sanitation for all;
7. Ensure affordable, reliable, and clean energy for all;
8. Promote economic growth, employment, and decent work for all;
9. Build resilient infrastructure and industry and foster innovation;
10. Reduce inter and intrastate equality;
11. Make cities and communities sustainable;

12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production;
13. Take urgent action to deal with climate change and its impacts;
14. Conserve and sustainably use water resources;
15. Take care of life on land through managing forests and land degradation;
16. Build strong institutions and inclusive societies through promoting peace and justice; and
17. Revitalise partnerships to achieve the sustainable goals.

The SDGs are aimed at sustaining the progress achieved during the 2000-2015 MDG period and look forward to bridging the gap between the missed targets. Like the MDGs, a Sustainable Development Goals Fund assisted needy states in their quest for reaching the SDGs. The SDGs are to be achieved by 2030. In this renewed effort too, poverty alleviation has been prioritised as goal number one and is, thus, the focus of this study.

As the world is moving from halving extreme poverty to ending poverty, South Asia is still grappling with the 2015 millennium targets. It missed most of the targets set out in the September 2000 MDG agenda. The overall situation of the region is not different from Sub-Saharan Africa with regard to poverty reduction, which is the first and foremost goal of both MDGs and SDGs. Unlike in Africa, the reason for non-eradication of poverty in South Asia is primarily a lack of will on the part of member states. Secondly, India and Pakistan, the two largest and most populous states play a key role in regional developments. By and large, their bilateral relationship shapes this region's ability to achieve socio-economic goals. After fifteen years of trying to meet the MDG poverty reduction target, India and Pakistan together still have the largest concentration of people living in debilitating poverty. The numbers of poor partly rose because people were unable to surpass the poverty line through increased income, as reflected in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Furthermore, elite capture worked against the poor. This is a kind of corruption in which resources are manoeuvred to benefit certain influential people rather than the larger population.[3] Vital resources include land that in turn produces food to reduce hunger, especially among the poor. Elite capture continued to skewer the benefits of any increase in the level of the GDP, which worked against the poor.

Overall, poverty figures also did not decline as expected under the MDGs because of uncontrolled population growth and, combined with natural calamities, posed serious challenges for South Asia. Natural calamities have the potential to put the target at risk. The latest report of Overseas Development Institute (ODI) tilted *The Geography of Poverty, Disasters and Climate Change in 2030* put 11 countries most at risk of disaster-induced poverty, including Pakistan. It also singled out India for a special mention. The report argued that poverty and disasters are closely interlinked, as the countries that are expected to have a very high level of poverty in 2030, coincidently, are the most vulnerable to natural hazards.[4]

Both India and Pakistan are at risk of natural disasters. Since a massive earthquake of 7.6 magnitude struck Pakistan in 2005, It has faced more than a dozen strong jolts that severely damaged infrastructure and upset the life of hundreds of thousands of people. Similarly, Indian river banks and deltas are prone to flooding. For instance, a massive flood in Bihar affected more than seven million people. These factors reversed most of the progress achieved towards the goal of eradicating poverty. Thus, the situation on ground urges both Islamabad and New Delhi to adopt a people-centric approach and to prioritise poverty as their first and foremost goal to make the region free of economic deprivation.

In line with this thinking, the paper in hand takes Pakistan and India as a collective case study and monitors their progress in meeting the first SDG goal related to poverty eradication by the year 2030. The paper is broadly divided into two main sections. The first looks at the progress achieved by 2015 under the umbrella of the MDGs and the causes behind missed the targets. The second section deals with the SDGs and highlights the achievements so far. It discusses the problems and prospects in visualising success in SDGs' 2030 commitment. The paper concludes that despite efforts, both India and Pakistan remained unable to meet the MDG target of eradicating poverty because of the strategic and security environment due to Indian and Pakistan rivalry and lack of political will. The paper argues that meeting SDGs is challenging but attainable if both states infuse genuine impulse and prioritise their non-traditional issues. The paper further argues that progress on poverty reduction in the whole of South Asia in general and India and Pakistan,

in particular, is grossly dependent on conflict and cooperation between these two big states. Hence, cooperation is the key to eradicating poverty in South Asia and this is attainable even before the SDG target year of 2030.

Methodology

This paper provides a comparative analysis of the progress achieved by India and Pakistan to reach the millennium development goal of ending poverty by 2015. The comparison is based on the data on economic figures, as well as poverty calculated on the basis of health factors. However, this data is not available equally for both Pakistan and India. Thus, the sources for Pakistan include official poverty estimates using calorie-based figures and the cost of basic needs through Poverty Head Count Ration (PHCR). For India, data is used from the Expert Group Report (EGR) prepared under the supervision of C. Rangarajan, former chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, and MDGs-specific country reports. Apart from official data, the paper adds published works such as working papers, credible newspapers, and the World Bank's estimates, with the intent to present a comprehensive analysis.

The paper also presents a brief comparison of the progress achieved in SDGs, as no official country-specific report is available yet. Moreover, the two countries utilise different methods to evaluate poverty. Since June 2016, Pakistan has used the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI). India, on the other hand, has not yet adopted the MPI to track its progress for achieving the SDGs. Therefore, I have extracted data for India from the global MPI for comparative analysis with Pakistan. The paper goes on to extend the discussion to shortfalls in the previous policies, present challenges, and future prospects to materialise the SDG vision of eradicating poverty by 2030.

The goal of halving poverty in the Millennium Development Agenda

The 2000-2015 MDGs and the 2015-2030 SDGs could together be said to form the UN's post-2015 Millennium Development Agenda.[5] To fully comprehend and analyse the prospects for the success of the SDGs, we return to the MDGs in which the UN had set the goal to

eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. As Table 1 shows, this goal had broadly three targets: target one was to halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of people whose income was less than $1.25 a day; target two was to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people; and target three was to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. These three targets had a total of nine indicators.

Every state had a choice to select two or all three targets. They could also modify the indicators for reaching the MDGs' first goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. For instance, there were three targets for this goal in which the first and the second target directly dealt with extreme poverty and hunger. Many states selected only two targets and adjusted the indicators according to their national poverty lines.

Table 1

Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Targets	Indicators
Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day	1.1 Proportion of population below $1 (PPP) per day 1.2 Poverty gap ratio 1.3 Share of poorest quintile in national consumption
Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people	1.4 Growth rate of GDP per person employed 1.5 Employment-to-population ratio 1.6 Proportion of employed people living below $1 (PPP) per day 1.7 Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment
Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	1.8 Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age 1.9 Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption

Source: Extracted from The United Nations Children's Fund official website, available at <https://www.unicef.org/statistics/index_24304.html>

Globally, the first MDG target of halving the rate of extreme poverty was met five years before the scheduled date of 2015. In 1990, more or less, half the population of developing countries was surviving on less than $1.25 a day that dropped to 14 percent in 2015. Progress towards realising the second target of achieving full employment and decent work for all, including women and young, remained below the

satisfactory level. Statistics revealed that the global employment-population ratio dropped by only two percent from 62 to 60. In the third target, the proportion of undernourished people fell sharply but not by the target of half the population.[6]

Pakistan adopted both targets for eventually achieving the goal of ending poverty and the three indicators against which progress was measured towards attaining the MDG target of eventually ending hunger that spelt out as follows:

1. Halving the proportion of population below the calorie-based food non-food poverty line;
2. Halving the proportion of underweight children under the age of five; and
3. Halving the proportion of population below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption.

Upon completion, in 2015, of the given timeframe, these indicators showed unsatisfactory progress, as Pakistan remained off-track with respect to halving the proportion of underweight children and the population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption. In all the provinces, i.e., Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and Balochistan, progress severely lagged, particularly with regard to the prevalence of underweight children.[7] The percentage of underweight children was 40 in 1990-91. It declined to 31.5 percent in 2011-12, which was still higher than the target of 20 percent.

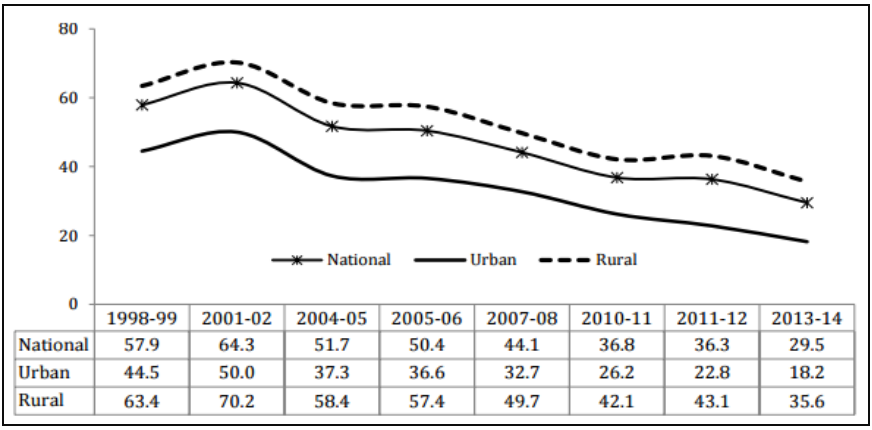
Regarding halving the proportion of population below the poverty line by 2015, Pakistan was generally on track. The MDG method of assessing poverty was based on Food-Energy Intake. Under this method, Pakistan's population below the poverty line fell from 34.5 percent in 2001/02 to 12.4 percent in 2010/11 and 9.3 percent for the year 2013-14. Thus, Pakistan was in line with the MDG target of reducing extreme poverty.

To monitor poverty even more accurately than during the 2000-2015 MDGs period, Pakistan adopted a new Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) approach after 2015. In the standard CBN methodology, basic food items are selected according to the minimum nutritional intake and then the cost of acquiring the basket is also added. According to this methodology, Pakistan's poverty percentage stands at 29.5, down from 58 percent during the MDG baseline year of 1990. This means that 55

million people were living below the poverty line in the year 2013-14. The urban incidence was estimated at 18.2 percent (down from 44.5 percent), whereas the rural incidence of poor persons was 35.6 percent (down from 63 percent). The figures also indicate that the rural household consumes more than urban families.[8] Overall, these figures compare favourably with the MDG baseline of the year 1990 and, therefore, Pakistan was successful in attaining the target of the reduction of poverty.

Figure 1

Pakistan's official poverty estimates for MDGs achievements



	1998-99	2001-02	2004-05	2005-06	2007-08	2010-11	2011-12	2013-14
National	57.9	64.3	51.7	50.4	44.1	36.8	36.3	29.5
Urban	44.5	50.0	37.3	36.6	32.7	26.2	22.8	18.2
Rural	63.4	70.2	58.4	57.4	49.7	42.1	43.1	35.6

Source: *Pakistan Economic Survey 2015-16,* Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan.

In the case of India, the country adopted a different set of criteria for the two indicators to measure poverty reduction for halving the number of poor persons between 1990 and 2015. For India, poverty meant, one, the proportion of people whose income was less than one dollar a day and, two, the Poverty Head Count Ratio (PHCR) to assess hunger that was an MDG co-indicator of poverty. The MDG target was to halve the proportion of people suffering from hunger. In 1990, India's PHCR stood at 47.8 percent, while the MDG target worked out to around 23.9 percent. India achieved this target ahead of the deadline. According to the 2011-12 PHCR estimates, the poverty ratio was 21.9 percent.

In India, efforts for poverty reduction have shown sustained growth. This is a result of an increase in social spending through programmes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment

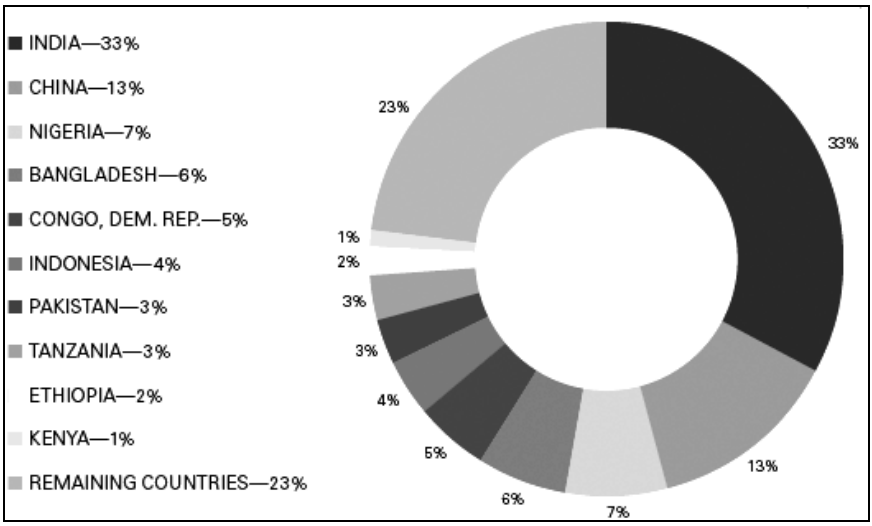
Guarantee Act of 2005 (MGNREGA) and National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). These programmes have undoubtedly played a significant role in poverty reduction. However, progress in the second target was low. A quarter of Indians remain undernourished, over one-third of children are underweight, and nearly one-third of the world's food insecure people live in India.[9] In 1990, the malnourished child percentage was 53.5. In a span of fifteen years, India was only able to cut it by 13.5 percent and the percentage stood at 40 in 2015, far higher than the MDG target of 22 percent.

Based on the Expert Group Report (prepared under the supervision of C. Rangarajan, former chairman of Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council of India), the monthly per capita consumption expenditure of Rs.972 in rural areas and Rs.1,407 in urban areas was set as the poverty line at the all-India level. This implies a monthly consumption expenditure of Rs.4,860 in rural areas or Rs.7,035 in urban areas for a family of five at 2011-12 prices.[10] Per day, it is Rs.32.4 for rural and Rs.46.9 for urban areas. The monthly per-capita consumption of Rs.972 for rural areas includes all food and non-food expenditures. It included Rs.554 for food items, Rs.141 for essential non-food items, and Rs.277 for other expenses. Similarly, Rs.1,407 for urban areas was the sum of expenses of Rs.656 for food items, Rs.407 for essential non-food items, and Rs.344 for other expenses.

According to this poverty line, 30.9 percent of India's rural population and 26.4 percent of urban population was poor in 2011-12. In total, 57.3 percent (363 million) of the whole population was below the poverty line, that was comparatively higher than Pakistan's official estimates. According to the World Bank's latest report, India alone shares 33 percent of the world's total number of people living below the poverty line of 1.25 dollars a day in the world (see Figure 1). Pakistan is better off in dealing with extreme poverty. It has already achieved the target of halving extreme poverty before 2015.

Figure 2

The share of the top ten countries in extreme poverty



Source: Prosperity for All: Ending Extreme Poverty, World Bank, 2014

If we look at India's and Pakistan's status in global estimates (World Bank, Headcount Analysis 2014), we find that 21.04 percent of the whole population (2008 estimates) in Pakistan was living below the poverty line of US $1.25 a day. If the baseline is increased to $2 a day (the international standard of middle-income countries), then around 60.19 percent of the population falls below the poverty line. In the case of India, 32.67 percent of its whole population falls below the poverty line of $1.25 a day. Whereas, according to the standard for middle-income countries, around 68.72 percent of the whole population is considered poor.[11] Comparatively, Pakistan's position is better than India in both international poverty line estimates. Even in comparison to other South Asian countries, Pakistan is better off than Bangladesh (43.25 and 76.54 percent in $1.25 a day and $2 a day, respectively) and Nepal (24.82 percent and 57.25 percent).[12]

The goal of eradicating poverty in the Sustainable Development Agenda

Failure to achieve MDGs in 2015 proved that traditional methods of poverty eradication had severe limitations. Traditionally, poverty was assessed by measuring income or consumption. However, calorie-based

or income-based criteria for measuring poverty are static in nature and address neither the incidences nor the multiple dimensions of poverty. The approach was basically one-dimensional and categorised a person as poor if his or her income was below the national or international poverty line. This cut-off line only ensured that people had enough money to buy food. According to Amartya Kumar Sen, "You cannot draw a poverty line and then apply it across the board to everyone in the same way, without taking into account personal characteristics and circumstances,"[13] because people who fall below the poverty line experience multiple deprivations such as poor health, lack of shelter, education, sanitation, and clean water.

This gap was firstly addressed in the Human Development Index (HDI), jointly developed by the Pakistani and Indian economists Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen. HDI has three dimensions under which countries are ranked as developed, developing, or underdeveloped: life expectancy, education, and per capita income. A country with a high rate of life expectancy, per capita income, and a long period of education is considered developed. From 1990 onwards, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) started using the HDI in its annual Human Development Reports.

To further address the multidimensionality of poverty Sabina Alkire and James Foster developed the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) to improve upon the HDI. This approach takes into account the multiple deprivations faced by the poor by increasing the criteria for assessing poverty. Although MPI also has three dimensions like HDI, they are different: health, education, and living standards. These dimensions further have ten indicators; two each for health and education, and six for living standards. Beginning in 2009, Mexico was the first country to use this approach for official poverty estimates. In 2010, the UN Human Development Report also introduced the MPI to rank countries according to the above-mentioned indicators. It was expected that this approach would adequately address the problem of the rich skewering the national development efforts to their own benefit, in other words, elite capture.

Having realised the holistic nature of the MPI approach, the UN (in contrast to the exclusive income-based approach adopted for the MDGs) incorporated the MPI into SDGs, as it supports the priorities set

for 2015-2030 agenda. Overall, the SDGs have a wide spectrum. It sets a total of 169 targets and 231 indicators. Poverty reduction, like in MDGs, has also been prioritised as its first goal, with the additional call to end poverty in all its manifestations by 2030. This goal has seven targets and twelve indicators that appear in the report as shown in the following table:

Table 2

Targets and indicators of the goal of poverty eradication

Targets	**Indicators**
1. By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day	1.1 Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status, and geographical location (urban/rural)
2. By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions	2.1 Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age 2.2 Proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
3. Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable	3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, new-borns, work-injury victims, and the poor and the vulnerable
4. By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular, the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology, and financial services, including microfinance	4.1 Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services 4.2 Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, with legally recognised documentation, and who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure

5. By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social, and environmental shocks and disasters	5.1 Number of deaths, missing persons, and persons affected by disaster per 100,000 people 5.2 Direct disaster economic loss in relation to global GDP 5.3 Number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies
6. Ensure significant mobilisation of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular, least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions	6.1 Proportion of resources allocated by the government directly to poverty reduction programmes 6.2 Proportion of total government spending on essential services (education, health, and social protection)
7. Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional, and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions	7.1 Proportion of government recurrent and capital spending to sectors that disproportionately benefit women, the poor, and vulnerable groups

Sources: Extracted from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals website, available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg1>

The targets above address the multidimensionality of poverty. Targets one and two urge complete eradication of extreme poverty, measured by persons earning less than $1.25 a day. These targets are a continuation of the MDG of halving poverty by 2015, and the SDG of halving the proportion of people of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions by 2030.

Target three bounds UN states that signed on the SDGs to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems for all people. Target four demands that all men and women, particularly the poor and vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources. They are also required to have equal rights with respect to access to basic services

related to land ownership, inheritance, natural resources, new technology, and finance, including microfinance.

Target five demands a comprehensive system for the poor to protect them from climate change-related shocks. Target six bounds the respective governments to allocate resources for poverty reduction programmes. Similarly, target seven demands to carve out pro-poor and gender-sensitive policies at national, regional, and international levels.

Monitoring progress in the above targets and indicators is a daunting task. In the MDGs, progress was mainly judged by the states' respective definitions, thus, results were ambiguous. MPI approach complements the traditional cost-based approach and accurately monitors progress towards the most challenging goal of ending poverty in all its forms by 2030. Many countries are reporting the incidence of multidimensional poverty either by using global MPI or national MPI. In addition to the three dimensions of MPI (health, education, and standard of living) it also consists of ten indicators: nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, improved sanitation, safe drinking water, electricity, flooring, and assets. These detailed indicators cover all foreseeable pitfalls to achieving the SDG of eradicating poverty in the world by 2030. Further details are presented in the table below.

Table 3

Deprivation thresholds and weights of global MPI

Dimension	Indicator	Threshold	Relative Weight
Education	Years of Schooling	At least one household member has less than five years of schooling	1/6
	Child School Attendance	At least one school-aged child is not attending school up to class 8	1/6
Health	Child Mortality	At least one child has died in the family	1/6
	Nutrition	At least one household member is malnourished.	1/6
Living Standard	Electricity	Not having electricity	1/18
	Improved Sanitation	Not having access to adequate sanitation	1/18
	Safe Drinking Water	No access to safe drinking water	1/18
	Flooring	Home with dirty floor	1/18
	Cooking Fuel	A household using low quality, polluted cooking oil	1/18
	Assets	The household does not have a radio, TV, telephone, bike, motorbike or refrigerator and does not own a car or truck.	1/18

Source: Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)

The MPI has three dimensions that are equally weighted, i.e., each dimension receives 1/3 weight. Sequentially, each indicator within health receives 1/6 weight. Similarly, education has 1/6 weight and living standard has 1/18 weight. A person is considered poor if he or she has a deprivation score higher than or equal to 1/3 or 0.333. In practical terms,

a poor person ticks off one-third of all boxes in the MPI questionnaire. The table placed in the Annex provides further illustration.

Both Pakistan and India, being part of this global effort, reiterated their commitment to end multidimensional poverty by 2030. Pakistan has been active since the launch of the SDGs and to meet these goals it launched a National Task Force. It maintains close coordination with the civil society and the private sector to share best practices, relevant knowledge, and modern techniques that are essential for achieving the post-2015 agenda. Moreover, Pakistan Poverty Research Papers (PRSPs) with regard to global commitment of poverty eradication is a document dedicated to monitoring initiatives towards achieving poverty targets. This document provides first-hand knowledge about the incidence of poverty in the country that is being incorporated into the country vision for 2030. Examples of these initiatives are Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, Benazir Income Support Programme, *Zakat* programmes, and Khushhal Pakistan Programme.

Thus, the country has internalised the SDGs as its National Goals and incorporated many global initiatives into its national development plans. Especially for poverty, Pakistan joined the Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network (MPPN) in 2014 and officially adopted an MPI approach to track achievements with regard to SDGs in 2015-16. This approach is also planned to be used for all districts using Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM) data with a purpose to examine deprivations at the grassroots level and subsequently plan its development policies. However, national poverty and headcount continue to be estimated using outcome-based consumption data.[14]

While using the MPI approach, Pakistan's Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reform launched the country's first-ever official report in June 2016. The report was compiled with technical help from UNDP and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), University of Oxford. According to this report, 39 percent of the population is multi-dimensionally poor in which the Federal Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Baluchistan have the highest rates of poverty, 73 percent and 71 percent, respectively. In KP, the poverty rate is 49 percent, in Gilgit-Baltistan and Sindh 43 percent, in Punjab 31 percent, and in Azad Jammu and Kashmir 25 percent. The report showed a

consistent downward trend form 55 percent in 2004 to 39 percent in 2015; however, progress is uneven, as disparities exist. In urban areas, poverty stands at 9.3 percent whereas 54.6 percent of the rural population is poor with very weak social indicators as compared to healthy economic indicators.[15]

India, though a member of the MPPN, has not yet adopted the MPI to track progress on the SDGs. Therefore, no country-specific report is available. Data for India is taken from the global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2016. According to the report, India's MPI value is 0.283 (using India Human Development Survey IHDS, 2005-06) that means 53.7 percent of the population is facing multidimensional poverty and average intensity across the poor is 52.7 percent.[16] Pakistan's score in this report stands at 0.230 (using Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey PDHS, 2012-13) that translates to 44.2 percent of population suffering from multidimensional poverty and average intensity across the poor is 52.1 percent. In a regional scenario, Afghanistan was found to be the poorest country with 66.2 percent (MPI-0.353), followed by India with 53.7 percent (MPI-0.283), Pakistan with 44.2 percent (MPI-0.230), Bangladesh with 41.3 percent (MPI-0196), Nepal with 28.6 percent (MPI-0.126), Bhutan with 27.2 percent (MPI-0.119), Sri Lanka and Maldives with around 5 percent (MPI-0.018) poverty. The average intensity level, however, was around 47 percent, and most concentrated in Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan with more than 50 percent of the population intensely deprived (see the table below).

Table 4

Multidimensional Poverty Index 2016, South Asia

Country	Year	MPI	% MPI poor (H)	Intensity of MPI (A)
Maldives	2009	0.018	5.2	35.6
Bhutan	2010	0.119	27.2	43.9
Nepal	2014	0.126	28.6	44.2
Bangladesh	2014	0.196	41.3	47.4
Pakistan	2012/13	0.230	44.2	52.1
India	2005/06	0.283	53.7	52.7
Afghanistan	2010/11	0.353	66.2	53.4

Source: Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)

Conclusion

The paper began with reflections on the goal of eradication of extreme poverty set out in the MDGs. Both India and Pakistan were moderately successful in achieving the target of halving the proportion of extreme poverty by 2015. Progress, however, was uneven. The goal of complete eradication of extreme poverty by 2030 under the SDGs, coupled with a target of halving the proportion of people of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions, is indeed challenging. Both states are lagging behind targets and have to go a long way to address the incidences and multiple dimensions of poverty. However, times demand the uplift of the region out of poverty in all its forms, otherwise, South Asia will lag behind in the global competitive race set by the 2030 SDGs.

In Pakistan, the government is keen to consolidate and galvanise national efforts to meet global commitments. Establishing a National Task Force on MDGs was a crucial step in this regard. Its brainstorming with the non-governmental and private sectors has resulted in innovative best-practice strategies geared towards achieving the SDGs' targets. The PRSPs document closely examines the initiatives geared towards achieving poverty targets. The initiatives recording success in poverty reduction include Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, Benazir Income Support Programme, *Zakat*, and Khushhal Pakistan. In the case of India, sustained growth with an increase in social spendings such as MGNREGA and National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) played a significant role in poverty reduction.

To further this effort, both India and Pakistan need to adopt an even greater holistic and integrated approach to deal with the menace of poverty. Poverty can be tackled with close coordination between public and private sectors and between the donor and receiver countries, regional cooperation, and joint ventures focusing on enhancing agricultural productivity and increased spending on social safety programs. In line with this thinking, as well as building upon the 2000-2015 Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund and the current Sustainable Development Goals Fund, India and Pakistan can allocate funds for an indigenous dedicated 'Sustainable Development Goals Achievement Fund (SDGAF)' in their respective national budgets. Prior to the utilisation of such a fund, it is important to identify the poor so that maximum benefit could be directed towards the people in real need.

The success of community targeting programmes and techniques can be used, for example from the *Zakat* programme. Pakistan should strengthen its three anti-poverty programmes that are running on community-based knowledge: *Zakat* and National Rural Support Programme.[17] The data for these programmes is generated by household surveys. Hence, these programmes provide an actual number of multifaceted poor at the grassroots level. For monitoring and transparency, a decentralised surveillance force can be set up with the help of local school teachers/counsellors that regularly report progress in their respective areas to the concerned ministry. For this purpose, an online user-friendly form needs to be prepared and proper training needs to be provided to conduct this job. This force would also help minimise corruption through elite capture.

Apart from targeted anti-poverty interventions, improvements in other sectors such as agriculture, governance, disaster management, and trade have a significant impact on poverty reduction. In agriculture, there is room for improvement in a knowledge-based agriculture system. Trade too has a potential to reduce poverty significantly if both states focus more on human security, follow liberal trade policies, and soften visa regimes. The goal of eradicating poverty is unlikely to be reached until governments come to terms with the increased risk of natural disasters. This is a serious matter because the ODI has found both Pakistan and India to be amongst the top eleven countries in the world at risk of natural disasters.

In short, Pakistan and India, as leaders in South Asia, could achieve the SDGs target of eradicating poverty through holistic community-based best practices. To this end, knowledge sharing is essential, especially via relaxed visa requirements. Since both countries have dominating agricultural sectors, their efforts, or lack thereof, have immense repercussions that impact attaining the SDG of eradicating poverty by 2030.

Annexe

Hypothetical illustration

Indicators	People in Households				Weights
	1	2	3	4	
Household size	4	7	5	4	
Education					
No one has completed five years of schooling	0	1	0	1	1/6=0.167
At least one school-age child not enrolled in school	0	1	0	0	1/6=0.167
Health					
At least one member is malnourished	0	0	1	0	1/6=0.167
One or more children have died	1	1	0	1	1/6=0.167
Living Standards					
No electricity	0	1	1	1	1/18=0.056
No access to clean drinking water	0	0	1	0	1/18=0.056
No access to adequate sanitation	0	1	1	0	1/18=0.056
House has dirt floor	0	0	0	0	1/18=0.056
Household uses "dirty" cooking fuel (dung, firewood or charcoal)	1	1	1	1	1/18=0.056
Household has no car and owns at most one bicycle, motorcycle, radio, refrigerator, telephone or television	0	1	0	1	1/18=0.056
Score c_i (sum of each deprivation multiplied by its weight)	**0.222**	**0.722**	**0.389**	**0.500**	
Is the household poor ($c \geq 1/3 = 0.333$)?	**No**	**Yes**	**Yes**	**Yes**	
Censored score $c_i(k)$	**0**	**0.722**	**0.389**	**0.500**	

Source: United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Reports, < http://hdr.undp.org/>

Note: Deprived =1 and non-deprived=0, the score below 0.333 or 1/3 will be considered 0 (no poor).

In the case of the first household, total members are four in which only two members are deprived, marked 1. So the total sum of the weights is 1+1= 0.167+0.167=0.222. This score is below than 0.333, therefore will be considered 0 that means no multidimensional poor.

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