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Global Multidimensional Poverty Rises for First Time Since 2010

UNDP-Oxford update finds progress is possible: 33 countries have at least halved multidimensional poverty in fewer than 15 years

New York, 12 October 2026 – The number of people living in multidimensional poverty has risen for the first time since the index was launched in 2010, reaching 1.2 billion, according to the 2026 update of the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) at the University of Oxford. That is 51.5 million more than in the previous update.

The update reveals that more than half of the 1.2 billion, 617 million, are children, and 83 percent live in rural areas. Yet it also shows that many countries continue to make progress, with some reducing poverty rapidly and at scale. Together, these findings point to both the urgency of renewed action and the possibility of success.

UNDP Administrator Alexander De Croo said: *“The rise in poverty should be a wake-up call for the world. Behind these figures are 1.2 billion people facing hardships that reinforce one another: hunger, missed schooling and a lack of clean water or electricity. This is unacceptable. But it does not have to be this way. We know progress is possible. Countries that have tackled these challenges together, rather than in isolation, have shown what determined action can achieve.”*

The global MPI looks beyond income to capture how people experience poverty in daily life. The index considers people to be multidimensionally poor if they are deprived in a third or more of the MPI’s ten weighted indicators in health, education and standard of living. Covering 108 countries in developing regions, representing 78 percent of the world’s population, the 2026 update provides insights on the breadth and depth of multidimensional poverty.

Number of people in multidimensional poverty rises

The latest update of the global Multidimensional Poverty Index find that 1.2 billion people are living in acute multidimensional poverty. That is 51.5 million more than in the previous update on a like-for-like basis– the first increase recorded since the index began in 2010.

PRESS RELEASE

Part of this rise reflects population growth. In 95 countries where no new survey data were available this year, updated population estimates increased the number of people counted as poor by 15.8 million. The remaining change reflects the combined effects changes in poverty incidence, demographic shifts, and differences in indicator coverage across survey rounds.

Among the 13 countries with newly updated MPI estimates this year, the picture is mixed. Five countries significantly reduced the share of people living in multidimensional poverty. In Egypt, Nepal and Tajikistan, both the poverty rate and the number of people living in multidimensional poverty fell significantly. In Angola and Zambia, the share of people in poverty also declined, but population growth outpaced poverty reduction, so that the total number of people living in poverty still increased.

Nigeria shows how fragile progress can be. After significant reductions in multidimensional poverty during the 2010s, this progress reversed in the 2020s, with both the poverty rate and the number of people living in poverty increasing.

Examples of success

Sustainable Development Goal target 1.2 calls for countries to reduce by at least half the proportion of men, women and children living in poverty in all its forms and dimensions by 2030. The 2026 MPI update shows that this target remains challenging, but achievable.

Among the 89 countries with MPI trend data, 33 have halved their MPI value in fewer than 15 years, including six countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Eswatini achieved especially strong progress over 15 years, with the share of people living in multidimensional poverty falling from 38.7 percent to 8.0 percent.

China recorded the fastest reduction among countries with available data, halving its MPI value in just four years, with the share of people living in multidimensional poverty falling from 9.5 percent to 4.2 percent between 2010 and 2014. Viet Nam also made rapid progress, halving its MPI value within seven years.

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About OPHI: The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) is a research centre based in the University of Oxford working on the multidimensional measurement of poverty and wellbeing to help guide effective policymaking around the world.