End poverty in all its forms everywhere

OUTLOOK

Countries in Asia and the Pacific have made important progress in reducing income poverty, and eradicating it is within reach. The primary challenge is to end poverty in all its forms everywhere while ensuring equitable and secure economic opportunities for all people and strengthening resilience, particularly in the face of new threats and risks, including as a result of climate change. Success will be highly dependent on several critical factors, including the effective targeting of social protection policies and job creation that increases support for the most vulnerable groups and marginalized communities of people.

THE PHOTO

Homes alongside railroad tracks, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Photo credit: ADB
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INSIGHTS

- Between 2010 and 2013, the poverty rate or the proportion of people living on less than $1.90 per day (in 2011 PPP) in the Asia-Pacific region fell to 10.3 per cent of the total population, down from 29.7 per cent for the period 2000–2004. For the same period (2010–2013), the total number of people who are poor fell to 400 million. When considering multidimensional poverty, at least 931 million people are impoverished across the region. Deprivations in health and living standards are the most striking.

- Sticking to business-as-usual practices will not make any significant impact on poverty reduction. A more innovative and comprehensive approach is needed, with increased focus on reducing the economic, social and environmental risks confronting people who are poor and who are particularly vulnerable to economic shocks and/or living in marginalized communities.

- Although there has been progress in the use of social protection programmes as a tool to address inequalities of opportunity (in health care and education, for instance) in the region, limited data disaggregation prevents the effective targeting of social protection and other policies to those who need it most.

- People living on less than $1.90 per day (in 2011 PPP) are concentrated in rural areas, among the young ages and in agriculture sector employment. Having only a primary school education and large-sized households are common features of poor people in South and South-West Asia.

- People in poverty are particularly more vulnerable to climate-related extreme events. They tend to live in hazard-prone areas, such as slums, steep slopes, seismic zones, floodplains, river banks and remote areas. Impoverished people lack the resources to invest in preventive measures, and they lack adequate savings to draw upon should disaster strike. Disasters are thus likely to push people who are poor into extreme poverty or push near-poor households into poverty.

- Women are more vulnerable to various forms of poverty due to the challenges they encounter when seeking decent jobs, credit, health care and education. In particular, women are more likely to end up with informal employment and to receive lower wages than men for an equal amount of work because of the limited protection of their workers’ rights, lack of wage-bargaining mechanisms and unsafe working conditions, typically while juggling the extra burden of unpaid care or household work.
Poverty reduction and eradication

- Poverty rates ($1.90 per day) are below 1 per cent in countries like Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Samoa, Thailand and Turkey.\(^7\)

- Poverty rates have fallen dramatically in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Viet Nam—they are now about 40–50 percentage points lower than the rates in the 1990s.\(^8\)

Poverty reduction and eradication

- In South and South-West Asia, nearly one in five persons (more than 338 million people) were living in poverty in 2012. Although poverty rates for this subregion have reduced by half (in Bangladesh and India, the rate even decreased by almost 30 percentage points) over the past two decades, poverty rates are still among the highest in the Asia-Pacific region.\(^9\)

- In smaller countries, such as Georgia and Papua New Guinea, poverty rates have fallen slowly or have been stagnant.\(^10\)

- In some countries, such as Timor-Leste, the poverty rate has increased.

- People living in poverty often live in rural areas. In China, the share of the rural population living in poverty in 2012 was 13 per cent, much higher than the 0.4 per cent in urban areas. In India, the poverty figures showed 24.8 per cent in rural areas and 13.4 per cent in urban areas in 2011.\(^11\)

Fulfilment of economic, social, financial and environmental rights

- In many countries, such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea, fewer than one in five persons are covered by social assistance programmes. In other countries, like Bhutan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, fewer than one in ten persons are covered.\(^12\) Similar trends are also apparent when looking at the proportion of the population covered by labour market programmes or the proportion of unemployed workers receiving unemployment benefits.
Resilience and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events

- Poverty eradication will be challenging with the occurrence of climate-related events because the region is particularly exposed to the impacts of climate change, with nine Asia-Pacific countries on the list of the 15 countries that are the most exposed and vulnerable to natural hazards. Over the past decade (2006–2015), disasters caused by natural hazards affected a total of 1.3 billion people in the region—roughly the same size as India’s entire population—and resulted in economic losses of roughly $379,000 billion.

EMERGING ISSUES

- Rapid population ageing combined with the lack of social security or pension benefits and the lack of targeted social programmes will likely further increase poverty among older persons.

- Social exclusion, economic uncertainty and environmental risks are increasing, including those related to natural disasters and extreme climate-related events.

- Although migration contributes to economic development, climate change-related migration will increase the vulnerability of women and communities in coastal areas, which in turn will lead to near-poor households falling into poverty.

TARGETS

1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day

1.2 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

1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable

1.4 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

1.5 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

1.a Ensure significant mobilization 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

1.b 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
NO POVERTY

SDG 1 - NO POVERTY