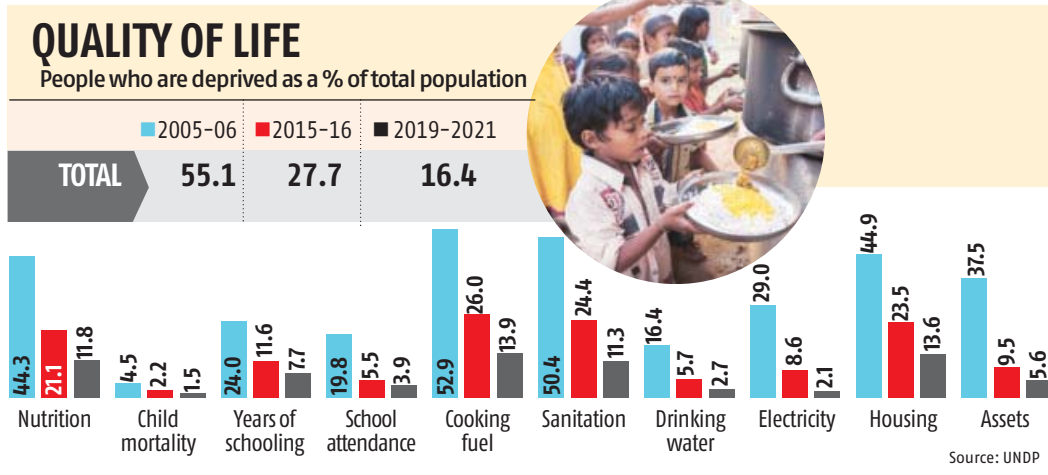


# 140 mn pulled out of poverty in India since 2015-16: UNDP

ASIT RANJAN MISHRA  
New Delhi, 17 October

India's multidimensional poverty fell by 140 million between 2015-16 and 2019-2021 compared to a decline of 275 million between 2005-06 and 2015-16, according to the latest assessment by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Using the latest data from the National Family Health Survey, the report said multidimensional poverty declined faster from 2015-2016 to 2019-21 at 11.9 per cent year-on-year — coinciding with the rule of the National Democratic Alliance government — as against an 8.1 per cent per year fall from 2005-2006 to 2015-2016, that mostly corresponds with the years of the United Progressive Alliance government. “This is unsurprising because relative poverty reduction is easier to achieve when starting levels of



poverty are lower,” the report said. The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), released by the UNDP and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), looks beyond income as a measurement of

poverty to understand how people experience poverty in different aspects of their daily lives through three parameters — health, education, and standard of living — which are further divided into 10 indicators.

The MPI value for India fell from 0.283 in 2005-2006 to 0.122 in 2015-2016, then further to 0.069 in 2019-2021, in sync with the decline in the incidence of poverty from 55.1 per cent to 27.7 per cent to 16.4 per cent. “In roughly

15 years... the MPI value, the incidence of poverty, and deprivations among poor people in the 10 MPI indicators were each more than halved,” the report added.

The UNDP said despite tremendous gains made by India, the ongoing task of ending poverty for the 228.9 million poor (the largest globally) in 2019/2021 is daunting — especially as the number has nearly certainly risen since the data were collected.

The report said the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on poverty in India cannot be fully assessed because 71 per cent of data points from the 2019-2021 NFHS for the country were collected before the pandemic.

According to recent estimates by the World Bank, around 56 million Indians might have plunged into extreme poverty in 2020 as a result of the pandemic, contributing to the 71 million increase in

the global tally. To be sure, the World Bank doesn't measure multidimensional poverty and its poverty estimates are based on an income of \$2.15 per day at purchasing power parity (PPP).

The UNDP said it is clear that multiple policy actions and schemes underpin the improved results in India. “There have been visible investments in boosting access to sanitation, cooking fuel, and electricity — indicators that have seen large improvements. A policy emphasis on universal coverage — for example in education, nutrition, water, sanitation, employment, and housing — likely contributed to these results,” it added.

Rural-urban disparities are stark in multidimensional poverty reduction: The percentage of people who are poor is 21.2 per cent in rural areas against 5.5 per cent in urban areas. “Rural areas account for nearly 90 per cent of

poor people: 205 million of the nearly 229 million poor people live in rural areas — making them a clear priority,” the report said.

Bihar, the poorest state in 2015-2016, saw the fastest reduction in the incidence of poverty, from 77.4 per cent in 2005-2006 to 52.4 per cent in 2015-2016, to 34.7 per cent in 2019-2021.

“Across states and Union Territories, the fastest reduction in relative terms was in Goa, followed by Jammu & Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan. In relative terms, the poorest states have not caught up.”

“Of the 10 poorest states in 2015-2016, only one (West Bengal) was not among the 10 poorest in 2019-2021. The rest — Bihar, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan — remain among the 10 poorest,” the UNDP said.