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### ADDRESSING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY TO ACHIEVE THE SDGS

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***Abstract:** Poverty and inequality continue to be significant challenges to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite economic growth and development efforts, the benefits of progress remain unevenly distributed, leaving millions without adequate income, education, healthcare, and basic services. Poverty is no longer limited to income deprivation but is multidimensional in nature, while inequality persists across income levels, gender, regions, and social groups. These disparities hinder social cohesion and sustainable development. Addressing poverty and inequality requires inclusive economic growth, strong social protection systems, and equitable access to quality education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Effective governance, targeted welfare programmes, and community participation play a vital role in reducing disparities. With particular emphasis on SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), this study highlights the importance of coordinated policy interventions and partnerships to ensure that development outcomes are inclusive and sustainable, ultimately fulfilling the global commitment to leave no one behind.*

***Keywords:** Poverty, Inequality, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Inclusive Growth*

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## **Introduction**

Poverty and inequality are among the most critical challenges facing the world today. Despite remarkable economic progress and technological advancement, millions of people continue to live in poverty and face unequal access to basic necessities such as food, education, healthcare, housing, and employment. These challenges directly threaten the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a global framework to promote inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development by 2030. In particular, SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) highlight the urgent need to eliminate poverty and reduce disparities within and among countries. Addressing poverty and inequality is essential not only for economic growth but also for social justice, human dignity, and long-term sustainability.

## **Understanding Poverty and Inequality**

Poverty is a multidimensional concept that extends beyond the lack of income. It includes deprivation in education, healthcare, nutrition, sanitation, housing, and access to opportunities. People living in poverty often experience social exclusion and vulnerability, which limit their ability to improve their living conditions. Inequality refers to the uneven distribution of income, wealth, resources, and opportunities among individuals and groups. It can be observed across income levels, gender, caste, ethnicity, region, and age. While poverty focuses on the minimum level of well-being, inequality examines the gap between different sections of society. High levels of inequality can exist even in economically growing countries, where development benefits are concentrated among a small segment of the population. Persistent inequality weakens social cohesion, increases conflict, and reduces the effectiveness of poverty reduction efforts.

## **Poverty, Inequality, and the SDGs**

The SDGs recognize that poverty and inequality are interconnected and must be addressed together. SDG 1 aims to end poverty in all its forms everywhere by ensuring access to basic services, social protection systems, and economic resources. SDG 10 focuses on reducing inequalities by promoting social, economic, and political inclusion and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

Poverty and inequality also affect the achievement of other SDGs, such as quality education (SDG 4), good health and well-being (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), and reduced hunger (SDG 2). Without addressing poverty and inequality, progress in these areas remains limited and uneven. Therefore, inclusive development is central to the success of the SDG agenda.

## **Causes of Poverty and Inequality**

Several factors contribute to persistent poverty and inequality. These include unemployment and underemployment, lack of access to quality education and healthcare, unequal land and asset distribution, discrimination based on gender or social identity, and regional imbalances. In developing countries, weak governance, corruption, and inadequate infrastructure further worsen these problems. Global factors such as economic globalization, climate change, and technological change also influence poverty and inequality. While globalization and technology have created opportunities, they have also widened income gaps by favoring skilled labor and urban regions. Climate change disproportionately affects poor and marginalized communities, increasing their vulnerability to poverty.

## **Strategies to Address Poverty and Inequality**

Addressing poverty and inequality requires comprehensive and coordinated policy approaches. Inclusive economic growth is a key strategy, ensuring that development creates employment opportunities and benefits all sections of society. Investment in education and skill development improves human capital and enables individuals to access better jobs and incomes. Strong social protection systems, such as pensions, food security programmes, health insurance, and cash transfers, play a crucial role in protecting vulnerable populations. Equitable access to quality healthcare and education reduces intergenerational poverty and promotes social mobility. Gender-sensitive policies and empowerment of women are essential for reducing inequality and achieving sustainable development. Good governance and effective institutions are equally important. Transparent policymaking, fair taxation, and efficient public service delivery help reduce disparities and ensure that resources reach those most in need. Partnerships among governments, civil society, the private sector, and international organizations strengthen implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction initiatives.

## **Role of Governments and Global Cooperation**

Governments play a central role in addressing poverty and inequality through policy formulation, welfare programmes, and public investment. In countries like India, initiatives such as employment guarantee schemes, food security programmes, and financial inclusion efforts have contributed to poverty reduction. However, challenges remain in reaching marginalized groups and reducing regional inequalities. At the global level, international cooperation is essential to support developing countries through financial assistance, technology transfer, and capacity building. Achieving the SDGs requires collective action, shared responsibility, and sustained commitment from all stakeholders.

## Conclusion

Addressing poverty and inequality is fundamental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and building a just, inclusive, and sustainable world. Poverty and inequality are complex and interconnected challenges that require multidimensional solutions. Inclusive economic growth, social protection, access to quality education and healthcare, good governance, and strong partnerships are key to reducing disparities. By prioritizing equity and inclusion, societies can ensure that development benefits reach everyone. Achieving the SDGs is not only a global obligation but also a moral responsibility to uphold human dignity and ensure that no one is left behind.

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