113 million Nigerians Living in Poverty, Deprived of Healthcare, Education — UN



·As 17.9m Citizen's battle Deprivation

About 113 million Nigerians are living in multidimensional poverty, with millions unable to access adequate healthcare, education and basic living conditions, according to a new United Nations report. The figure represents 48.7 per cent of Nigeria's population and highlights the difficulties many households face in meeting essential needs despite previous efforts to reduce poverty. The findings were contained in the 2026 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index report released in October by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. Unlike poverty measurements based mainly on income, the multidimensional poverty index examines the different forms of deprivation people experience in their daily lives, including access to healthcare, schooling, electricity, sanitation and decent housing.

The report showed that Nigerians classified as multidimensionally poor experience deprivation across an average of 55 per cent of the indicators used to assess health, education and living standards. It also identified 28.7 per cent of the population as living in severe multidimensional poverty. According to the findings, Nigeria has lost some of the progress recorded in reducing poverty between 2018 and 2021, with more people now

experiencing deprivation.



The report explained that poverty had initially declined between 2013 and 2021 before increasing again in 2024. “Like for like, the share poor fell from 42.3% in 2013 to 33.0% in 2021, then rose to 38.7% in 2024. That is nearly 18 million more poor people: three-quarters from a higher rate, one quarter from population growth”. The figures suggest that the increase cannot be attributed to population growth alone, as a larger proportion of Nigerians also fell into poverty during the period examined. The report further revealed a wide difference between poverty levels in rural communities and urban areas.

It found that 68.9 per cent of Nigerians living in rural areas were multidimensionally poor, compared with 24.8 per cent of those living in towns and cities. Severe poverty was also considerably more widespread in rural communities, affecting 45.1 per cent of residents, against 9.3 per cent in urban areas. Geographically, the burden was concentrated in northern Nigeria, particularly the North-West and North-East geopolitical zones. “It is heaviest in the North West and North East”, the report noted. The findings also identified limited access to clean cooking facilities and electricity as two major contributors to poverty in Nigeria. According to the report, 47.4 per cent of Nigerians were both multidimensionally poor and without clean cooking fuel, while 37.6 per cent were poor and lacked electricity. The UN suggested that improvements in these areas could help reduce deprivation, particularly among households that continue to depend on traditional cooking methods or live without reliable power supply. “These are gaps that policy knows how to close”, UN noted. Beyond Nigeria, the report presented a troubling picture of poverty across developing countries. It estimated that 1.2 billion people worldwide were living in acute multidimensional poverty, marking the first recorded increase in the global figure since the index was introduced in 2010. The latest estimate represented an additional 51.5 million people compared with the previous report.

UNDP Administrator Alexander De Croo described the development as a warning to governments and international organizations, urging greater attention to the conditions affecting vulnerable populations. He said the figures reflected the daily difficulties faced by people who lack food, education and essential public services. “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,” he said in a press release. More than half of those identified as living in acute poverty globally were children, according to the report. However, UNDP explained that the increase in the global number of poor people was partly influenced by population growth. It also cautioned that fresh data was available for only 13 of the 108 developing countries covered, a limitation that affects comparisons with previous years. Despite the overall increase, the report highlighted progress in several countries. It found that 33 countries had reduced their multidimensional poverty rates by at least half over the past 15 years. Six of those countries were in sub-Saharan Africa, while China and Vietnam were among the Asian countries identified as having made significant progress. The findings underline the continuing challenges facing Nigeria and other developing countries in improving access to essential services and ensuring that economic development translates into better living conditions for their populations.

The report co-produced by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), estimates that 90.1 million Nigerians were living in multidimensional poverty in 2024, compared with 72.2 million in 2021. The report

said Nigeria recorded the largest increase in the number of people living in multidimensional poverty among the five countries that experienced a rise over their latest measurement periods. Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Guinea and Kyrgyzstan were the other countries. It said the increase reversed the progress Nigeria recorded between 2018 and 2021, when the proportion of people living in multidimensional poverty declined. The report noted that Nigeria's MPI value rose from 0.175 in 2021 to 0.208 in 2024, indicating an increase in the combined incidence and intensity of deprivation. The intensity of deprivation among multidimensionally poor Nigerians also increased from 52.9 percent to 53.6 percent during the period.

water and sanitation. The report said its estimates are based on household survey data collected in different years. Nigeria's latest estimate is based on 2024 data and does not represent a direct measurement of poverty in 2026.

NIGERIA'S POVERTY PROGRESS REVERSED

The report said Nigeria had recorded reductions in multidimensional poverty in the preceding years before the latest increase. The country's MPI value declined from 0.230 in 2013 to 0.202 in 2018 and 0.175 in 2021, before rising to 0.208 in 2024. The proportion of people living in multidimensional poverty followed a similar pattern, falling from 42.3 percent in 2013 to 37.2 percent in 2018 and 33 percent in 2021 before increasing to 38.7 percent in 2024. The number of people affected declined from 76.3 million in 2018 to 72.2 million in 2021 before rising to 90.1 million in 2024. The latest figures suggest that the country's earlier progress was not sustained. The report also highlights significant differences in deprivation across Nigeria's subnational regions. Multidimensional poverty incidence ranges from 3.7 percent to 88.3 percent across the regions covered by the analysis. It compares Yobe and Sokoto, two of Nigeria's poorest subnational regions with similar MPI values, to demonstrate how the types of deprivation experienced by communities can differ even when their overall poverty levels are comparable. The report says such differences underline the importance of examining individual deprivation indicators rather than relying solely on aggregate poverty figures.



WHAT IS MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY?

Unlike income-based measures, which assess poverty based on how much people earn or spend, the MPI examines overlapping disadvantages experienced by people in their daily lives. The global MPI measures deprivation across three dimensions: health, education and standard of living. Its 10 indicators include nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing and household assets. A person is classified as multidimensionally poor if their household experiences deprivation in at least one-third of the weighted indicators. The measure captures circumstances in which people may experience several disadvantages simultaneously, such as inadequate access to education, electricity, clean

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA HAS THE HIGHEST MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY BURDEN

Beyond Nigeria, the report estimates that 1.2 billion people across 108 countries live in acute multidimensional poverty. The figure represents 18.9 percent of the 6.3 billion people covered by the index. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest multidimensional poverty rate of all the world's regions, with 616 million people, or 51.4 percent of its population, living in poverty. The region accounts for more than half of the world's multidimensionally poor population. South Asia follows, with 393 million people living in multidimensional poverty. The report found that 83.3 percent of the world's multidimensionally poor people, or about 998 million, live in rural areas, compared with 200 million in urban areas. The incidence of poverty in rural areas stands at 28.7 percent, against seven percent in urban areas. It also found that children bear a disproportionate share of the burden. Children below the age of 18 account for 617 million, or 51.5 percent, of the world's multidimensionally poor population. Globally, approximately one in every three children lives in multidimensional poverty, compared with one in seven adults. In sub-Saharan Africa, 355 million children live in multidimensional poverty, accounting for 57.7 percent of the region's poor population.

GLOBAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INCREASES

The report said the number of people living in multidimensional poverty worldwide increased for the first time since the index was launched in 2010. The latest estimate of 1.2 billion represents an increase of 51.5 million people compared with the previous update. Of the 1.2 billion people living in multidimensional poverty, 534 million, or 44.6 percent, experience severe poverty, meaning they are deprived in at least half of the weighted indicators. An additional 952 million people are considered vulnerable to multidimensional poverty because they experience significant deprivation across multiple indicators but do not meet the threshold for classification as poor. The report covers 108 countries and represents approximately 78 percent of the world's population. Despite the overall increase, the report found that progress remains possible. Of the 89 countries with data that allow comparisons over time, 33 have reduced their MPI values by at least half in fewer than 15 years, including six countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The findings are relevant to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal target of reducing by at least half, by 2030, the proportion of men, women and children living in poverty in all its dimensions. The report said the global figures point to the need for renewed efforts to address overlapping deprivations while demonstrating that substantial reductions in multidimensional poverty are achievable.

The 2026 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) report highlights severe regional disparities within Nigeria, illustrating a massive divide between geopolitical zones and a stark contrast between rural and urban realities.

State-by-State Rankings (Highest Poverty).

Subnational poverty incidence in Nigeria spans an incredibly wide range, from a low of 3.7% in the least-deprived areas to a high of 88.3%. The states experiencing the highest rates of multidimensional poverty are heavily concentrated in the northern regions,

Ran	State	Poverty Rate (%	of	Geopolitical
1		88.3%		North West (NW
2		84.6%		North West (NW
3		84.2%		North East (NE
4		84.0%		North West (NW
5		75.7%		North West (NW
6		69.0%		North East (NE
7		69.0%		North Central
8		68.8%		North East (NE
9		66.6%		South East (SE
10		66.3%		North West (NW
11		65.1%		North East (NE
12		62.2%		North East (NE

with Ebonyi being the only southern state to place in the top tier. The 12 states with the highest multidimensional poverty rates according to the OPHI Global MPI Country Briefing include:

The report emphasizes that even states with similar overall scores experience poverty differently. For instance, the primary drivers of poverty in Yobe lean heavily toward nutritional deficits and child mortality, whereas Sokoto faces more severe deficits in clean water and electricity.

Rural vs. Urban Disparities

The divide between rural and urban populations remains one of the most critical structural challenges highlighted by the UNDP and OPHI.

centers.

Key Findings on Nigeria's Poverty

Population Affected: An estimated 90.1 million Nigerians live in multidimensional poverty under the comparable trend series (up from 72.2 million in 2021), meaning an additional 17.9 million people fell into poverty. Global Standing: Nigeria recorded the largest increase in the number of multidimensionally poor people globally among the countries registering a rise during this period (ahead of Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Guinea, and Kyrgyzstan). Alternative National Estimate: A separate national estimate in the report puts the figure at 113.32 million people (or 48.7% of the population).

MPI Score & Intensity: Nigeria's MPI value worsened from 0.175 in 2021 to 0.208 in 2024, with the average poor person deprived in 53.6% of weighted indicators.



- Rural Concentration: Nationally and globally across Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 8 out of 10 multidimensionally poor people live in rural areas.
- Compounded Deprivations: Rural households face severe, overlapping deprivations across all core indicators—including a lack of clean cooking fuel, poor access to electricity, sub-standard housing, and lower school attendance rates.
- Exacerbating Factors: Rural poverty, particularly in the North-West and North-East zones, is intensely exacerbated by localized systemic issues. Ongoing insecurity from banditry and communal clashes (e.g., in Zamfara and Taraba alongside insurgency (e.g., in Borno and Adamawa) has severely disrupted farming, local markets, and infrastructure development, widening the gap with more stable, urbanized southern commercial

Core Drivers of Deprivation

- **Living Standards**: Account for 40.6% of Nigeria's overall poverty value. 37.6% lack clean cooking fuel. 31.3% lack electricity. 28.5% lack adequate housing.
- **Education**: Accounts for 30.6% of the poverty value.
- **Health:** Accounts for 28.8% of the poverty value.
- **Regional Disparities**: Subnational poverty incidence ranges widely (from 3.7% to 88.3%), with northern states bearing the heaviest burden. Specific drivers vary by region—for example, poor nutrition and child mortality weigh heavier in Yobe, while water and electricity deficits are more acute in Sokoto. Nigeria's capital importation hits $23bn as foreign reserves exceed $50bn