Society & Social Justice · GS - II

“The incidence and intensity of poverty are more important in determining poverty based on income alone.” In this context, analyze the latest United Nations Multidimensional Poverty Index Report.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2020	GS - II	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Multidimensional Poverty Index; incidence and intensity; health; education; living standards; Alkire-Foster methodology; India’s poverty profile; regional disparities; policy implications; data limitations

Model Answer

Introduction

Income poverty measures whether household resources fall below a specified threshold. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) developed the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) to capture overlapping deprivations in health, education and living standards.

Understanding incidence and intensity

- **Incidence:** The proportion of people who experience multidimensional poverty.
- **Intensity:** The average proportion of weighted indicators in which multidimensionally poor people are deprived.
- **Combined measure:** The MPI is calculated by multiplying the incidence of poverty by its intensity, capturing both the number of poor people and the severity of their deprivation.

Key findings and significance

The 2020-era global MPI reports showed that multidimensional poverty was concentrated in developing regions, particularly South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. India accounted for a substantial share of the world's multidimensionally poor population.

- **Health:** Nutrition and child mortality indicators reveal deprivations that income figures may not fully capture.
- **Education:** School attendance and years of schooling identify persistent human-capital deficits.
- **Living standards:** Inadequate sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, cooking fuel and assets reveal poor living conditions.
- **Policy targeting:** Indicator-level data help governments identify which services and communities require greater attention.

Limitations

MPI estimates depend on the availability and comparability of household survey data. Different countries may have data from different years, and the global index may not capture every local deprivation. Income poverty therefore remains a useful complementary measure.

Way forward

India should combine MPI analysis with income and consumption data, strengthen nutrition and education services, improve sanitation and housing, and focus on regions and social groups facing overlapping disadvantages.

Conclusion

Poverty is multidimensional, and its incidence and intensity reveal different aspects of deprivation. Combining MPI with income-based measures supports more precise, inclusive and evidence-based policymaking.