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30 crore people still live in extreme poverty in India: UN report

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NEW DELHI: About 30 crore people still live in extreme poverty in India even as the Millennium Development Goal (MGD) programme will expire in December, a United Nations report has said.

"Still nearly 300 million people live in extreme poverty in India and face deprivation in terms of access to basic services, including education, health, water, sanitation and electricity," the report - India and the MGDs: Completing the Task - said.

India, which has a population of over 125 crore, adopted the United Nation's MGD in 2000 with an aim to free millions from extreme poverty and hunger, illiteracy, poor health.

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The eight-point MGD among others targets

promotion of gender equality and women empowerment, reducing child mortality, improve maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and environmental sustainability.

"India has made a great progress on MGDs, but there is no room for complacency, because there are gaps relative to the goals and targets.

"There are enough opportunities and there is a lot of scope to catch up, and it is critical that by the end of the year when the MGD expires, we really accelerate momentum during this year so that we start the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda," said Shamshad Akhtar, UN Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP).

India has an opportunity to become a leader in sustainable development. It has achieved the poverty reduction target, but the progress is uneven, said the report.

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...being home to one-third of the world's population, the world is not going to achieve the SDG goal of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 unless India does not (achieve them)," Akhtar said.

After MGD expiry, the UN will begin its SDG programme. India has halved incidence of poverty from 1990s. Still over 27 crore people in 2012 remained in extreme poverty, making the post-2015 goal of eliminating extreme poverty by 2030 challenging, but feasible, it said.

It is significant that countries across the globe have made social development a public policy through MGD, said TCA Anant, Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Planning and Chief Statistician.

"We ourselves bring our report. From our report I can say that we have achieved progress on number of indicators," he said.

Seeing MGD an opportunity, he said, it allows India to sharpen its capability of data mining. "We realised we faced enormous challenges in our capabilities to measure. There are many indicators in the goal on which we still have limited information," said Anant.

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