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Poverty alleviation in India: A study of national policies and Programmes

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Abstract

The paper discusses the implementation of national policies and programmes in removing poverty in some Indian states by taking into account the factors of population, sex ratio, and literacy rate and number of below poverty line people. The study is based on data collected from estimate reports and national level assessment reports and it is related to the states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand which are also known as BIMARU states. Poverty is a social-economic phenomenon in which a section of society is deprived of basic necessities of life like food, clothing, housing, education, etc. According to Census of India, 2011, in India out of the total population of 121 cores, 83.3 cores lives in rural areas. Thus, nearly 70 per cent of the India's population lives in rural areas. Major Anti-Poverty programmes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Rastriya Sama Vikas Yojana (RSVY), Food for work programme, Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Pradhan Mantri Jandhan yojana, Antyodaya plan., Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana, Digital India Programm, etc. aim at reducing poverty in India.

Keywords: Poverty alleviation, National Policies and Programmes.

Introduction

Poverty is a chronic problem in all developing countries. India is also no exception to it. There has always been intensive debate in the country on the question of how to remove poverty. "The phenomenon of mass poverty in idea of developing countries and its relationship to the development process has been the subject of intense study for the past two decades. As a result, a considerable consensus has emerged on a number of issues. The pessimistic view that the growth process in developing countries has the perverse effect of actually accentuating poverty commands far fewer followers today than it once did. It is now widely recognized that the process of growth in most countries, even if not as equitable as might be wished has at least led to significant improvements in the conditions of living of the poor. However, it is also evident that in many countries the pace of improvement has been slow, and in general much below expectations."^[1]

Though in India about 70 per cent people face the problem of poverty there is variation in the level deprivation among the people of different regions. There is no uniformity between rural and urban people and also among the people of different states with regard to their level of poverty. The people of some states are poorer than those of other states. "The poverty ratio was highest level in Chhattisgarh at 39.93 per cent followed by Jharkhand (36.96 per cent), Manipur (36.89 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (34.67 per cent) and Bihar (33.47 per cent). Goa had the least percentage of people living below poverty line at 5.09 per cent followed by Kerala (7.05 per cent), Himachal Pradesh (8.06 per cent), Sikkim (8.19 per cent) and Punjab (8.26 per cent)".^[2]

Poverty Alleviation

While discussing the question of poverty it is necessary to understand its meaning and the various factors which leads to

poverty. Without comprehending it, it is not possible to grasp the concept of poverty. 'Poverty is a social-economic phenomenon in a developing country which a section of society is unable to fulfill people even its basic necessities of life. The minimum needs are food, clothing, housing, education and other basic minimum human needs. Humanity faces pains and suffers so if does not attain subsistence level of such needs'.^[3]

Poverty has been defined differently by different authorities, but the definition by World Bank appears to be more appropriate. "The World Bank (1990:26) defines on the report in poverty as "the inability to attain a minimal standard of living". The World Bank website on 'Poverty Reduction and Equity' defines poverty in comprehensive manner, saying, "Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom."^[4]

India is a country of villages. Without improving the condition of rural people it is not possible to improve the condition of the country. "In India, out of total population of 121 cores, 83.3 cores live in rural areas (Census of India, 2011). Thus, nearly 70 per cent of the India's population lives in rural areas. These rural populations can be characterized by mass poverty, low levels of literacy and income, high level of unemployment, and poor nutrition and health status. In order to tackle these specific problems, a number of rural development programmes are being implemented to create opportunities for improvement of the quality of life of these rural people".^[5] the focus of the Government always remains on alleviating the condition of people living in rural areas.