



## POVERTY ALLEVIATION STRATEGIES IN SOCIETY IN INDIA

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**Abstract:** India is a developing country. Even if there is growth in its economy, the nation faces many challenges that act as an impediment in its development process. One such challenge is the existence of widespread poverty in India. Although there is a reduction in the percentage of people residing below the poverty line, the digits aren't favourable after that either. As of May 2021, about 84 million people were found dwelling in severe deprivation which makes up about 6% of the total population of the country. However, the Government has been attempting hard to raise aloft these individuals out of the clutches of poverty through various **poverty alleviation programmes**, but that has some contradicting perspectives in India.

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### Introduction

Poverty Alleviation is the set of steps taken in an economic and humanitarian way for eradicating poverty from a country. According to the World Bank, if a person is living on \$1.90 a day or less, then he/she is living in extreme poverty, and currently, 767 million people of the world fall under that category. According to the last released official data, in 2011, 268 million people in India were surviving on less than \$1.90 a day. Various Programmes and Schemes under the Government of India were launched to eradicate poverty and for providing basic amenities to the poor households.

Schemes like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Housing for All by 2022 were developed to provide housing to the rural and urban poor. The latest government schemes like Start-Up India and Stand Up India focuses on empowering people to earn their livelihood.

At the beginning of the new millennium, 260 million people in the country did not have incomes to access a consumption basket which defines the poverty line. Of these, 75 per cent were in the rural areas. India is home to 22 per cent of the world's poor. Such a high incidence of poverty is a matter of concern in view of the fact that poverty eradication has been one of the major objectives of the development planning process. Indeed, poverty is a global issue. Its eradication is considered integral to humanity's quest for sustainable development. Reduction of poverty in India is, therefore, vital for the attainment of

international goals. Poverty is a social-economic phenomenon in which a section of society is unable to fulfill even its basic necessities of life. The minimum needs are food, clothing, housing, education and other basic minimum human needs. Humanity faces pains and miseries if it does not attain a subsistence level of such needs. It is generally agreed that only these would fail to reach a certain minimum consumption standard should be regards as poor. Poverty is about contradiction of opportunities and fulfillment of human potential. Poverty and inequality are closely related and inequality appears to have been on the rise worldwide in recent decades at both national and international levels. More than 80 percent of the world's population lives in countries where income differentials are widening. The poorest 40 percent of the world's population account for only 5 percent of global income. On the other hand, the richest 20 percent account for 75 percent of world income, according to the United Nations Development Programme. Poverty is the principal cause of hunger and under nourishment. According to most recent estimates of the Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the number of hungry people worldwide has reached 963 million or roughly 15 percent of the estimated world population (FAO, 2009). Poverty is widespread in India, with the nation estimated to have a third of the world's poor. The World Bank (2005) estimated that 41.6 percent of the total Indian population lived under the international poverty line of US \$1.25 per day (PPP), reduced from

60 percent in 1981. Poverty eradication has been one of the major objectives of planned development in India. According to the criterion of household consumer expenditure used by the Planning Commission of India, 27.5 percent of the population was living below the poverty line in 2004–2005, down from 51.3 percent in 1977–1978, and 36% in 1993–1994 (Economic Survey 2009-10). The overwhelming fact about poverty in the country is its rural nature. Major determinants of poverty are lack of income and purchasing power attributable to lack of productive employment and considerable underemployment, inadequacy of infrastructure, affecting the quality of life and employability, etc. It means to understand the definition of poverty; one should have knowledge of poverty line.

### Review of the Literature

The National Planning Committee in 1936 under Nehru has made an economic review and recognised that “there was lack of food, of clothing, of housing and of every other essential requirement of human existence”. Against this assessment, the Committee declared that the development policy objective should be to “ensure an adequate standard of living for the masses, in other words, to get rid of the appalling poverty of the people”. Towards this end, the Committee defined goals for the total population in terms of nutrition (involving a balanced diet of 2400 to 2800 calories per adult worker), clothing (30 yards per capita per annum) and housing (100 sq. ft per capita) (Ravi, 2013). There has been no uniform measure of poverty in India. The Planning Commission of India has accepted the Tendulkar Committee report which says that 33% of people in India live below the Poverty line (Jay, 2013). The effectiveness and sustainability of pro-poor growth process is however, clearly contingent upon whether an enabling environment exists for the realization of purchasing power and basic capabilities like the capability of being free from hunger, ill health and illiteracy for the poor and the disadvantaged. Employment growth, both in terms of quantity and quality, in sectors which are more labour-intensive is critical for a pro-poor growth process (CDHR, 2005).

### What is Below Poverty Line (BPL)?

Below Poverty Line (BPL) can be defined as an economic benchmark used in the identification of economically weaker people and households. BPL is set by the Government of India based on a threshold income. The households or individuals having an income below this threshold value are considered to be under the below poverty line.

### Measuring BPL in India

The poverty line solely depends on the per capita income in India rather than the level of prices. The poverty line is the minimum income required to purchase the basic goods and services that are essential to satisfy the basic human needs. The proportion of the population that is below this poverty line is called the poverty ratio or headcount ratio. Similar approaches are followed by most countries and international institutions for determining BPL.

In India, the first official rural and urban poverty lines at the national level were introduced in 1979 by Y. K. Alagh Committee. Criteria for the measurement of BPL are different for the rural and urban areas.

- Currently, according to the Tenth Five-Year Plan, the degree of deprivation is measured with the help of parameters with scores given from 0–4, with 13 parameters.
- Families with 17 marks or less (formerly 15 marks or less) out of a maximum of 52 marks have been classified as BPL.
- The poverty line is calculated every 5 years. According to the recent estimation based on inflation, the threshold income should be more than Rs. 962 a month for urban areas and Rs 768 a month in rural areas i.e., above Rs. 32 a day in an urban area and above Rs. 26 a day in a rural area.

#### Poverty Alleviation in India- Five Year Plans

Eleven Five Year Plans were launched to eradicate poverty from India. The list of these Five Year Plans that started in the year 1951 is given below:

- First Five Year Plan (1951- 1956): The plan focused mainly on agriculture and irrigation and aimed at achieving an all-round balanced development.
- Second Five Year Plan (1956-1961): It focused on the growth of basic and heavy industries, expansion in employment opportunities, and an increase of 25 per cent in the national income.
- Third Five Year Plan (1961-1966): The Chinese aggression (1962), Indo-Pak war (1965), and the severest drought led to the complete failure of the third five-year plan. It was replaced by three annual plans that continued from 1966 to 1969.
- Fourth Five Year Plan (1966-1974): It aimed at increasing national income by 5.5 per cent, creating economic stability, reducing inequalities in income distribution, and achieving social justice with equality.
- Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-1979): This plan mainly focused on the removal of poverty (Garibi Hatao) and aimed in bringing larger

sections of the poor masses above the poverty line. It also assured a minimum income of Rs. 40 per person per month calculated at 1972-73 prices. The plan was terminated in 1978 instead of (1979) when the Janata Government came to power.

- Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-1985): Removal of poverty was the main objective of the sixth five-year plan with a major focus on economic growth, elimination of unemployment, self-sufficiency in technology, and raising the lifestyles of the weaker sections of the society.
- Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90): The Seventh Five Year Plan aimed in improving the living standards of the poor with a significant reduction in the incidence of poverty.
- Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97): This plan aimed at employment generation but later failed in achieving most of its targets.
- Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002): The ninth five-year plan focused on the areas of agriculture, employment, poverty, and infrastructure.
- Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007): The tenth five-year plan aimed at the reduction of the poverty ratio from 26 per cent to 21 per cent by the year 2007 and also to help the children in completing five years of schooling by 2007.
- Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012): The eleventh five-year plan targets towards reducing poverty by 10 percentage points, generating 7 crore new employment opportunities, and ensuring electricity connection to all villages.

### Poverty alleviation programmes in India

Poverty alleviation is described as the set of ways framed by the government to deal with the issue of poverty. The main intention is to hoist people out of the grasps of poverty. Various schemes have been undertaken by the government to eliminate this evil of poverty from our country. Moreover, due to the lack of infrastructure and other basic facilities in the rural areas, the extent of poverty in rural households is more than the metropolitan ones. Some of the **poverty alleviation programmes** launched by the Indian government are:

#### 1. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)

IRDP is one of the driving schemes of **poverty alleviation programmes** that has bestowed a lot in ridding the evil of deprivation to some extent. Introduced in 1978-79, the major objective of the scheme stands as providing self-employment to the target audience that exists below the poverty line. This target group includes

agricultural labourers, small and marginal farmers and rural artisans. In addition, inclusions are compelled where 50% is allotted to the scheduled castes and tribes.

#### 2. Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana

The above scheme is the reformation of the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana. Currently, this programme is known by the name of Sampurna Grameen Rozgar Yojana. Under this, the matter-of-fact is generating demand-driven communities in the rural areas with the rationale of employing the people. Employment is provided to those living below the poverty line defined by the government. Furthermore, 3% has been allocated to providing barrier-free infrastructure to those people who are disabled.

#### 3. Pradhan Mantri Grameen Awaas Yojana

Launched in the year 2015, the above programme is one of the most flourishing schemes under the **poverty alleviation programmes** initiated by the government. The main aim is to provide free houses for the people living in the rural areas that are considered BPL. Here, the advancement is made through the subsidy process, involvement of the private sector and reasonable housing to the people at subsidized rates.

#### 4. National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)

The programme was launched in the year 1995, with its main objective of giving social security to the neglected categories of the society i.e., widows, disabled persons, aged persons belonging to the BPL section of the society. There are three schemes under this particular programme:

- National Old Age Pension Scheme  
This provides pensions to the people who are contemplated as destitute. The main purpose of this scheme is to bestow social security to the eligible beneficiaries. In this, the beneficiaries don't have to contribute at the first phase to receive this pension under the National Old Age Pension Scheme.
- National Maternity Benefit Scheme  
The government provides funds under this scheme to the women for their prenatal and postnatal sustenance. This financial grant is given to those women belonging to families that aren't well financially. The person gets cash-based aid directly from the government.
- National Family Benefit Scheme  
The funds are provided to those families whose main wage earner dies due to any reason. Under this, a sum of 10,000 is provided to the household.

#### 5. Annapurna

The scheme had its initial enactment in 1999-2000 where its main aim has always been to provide a nutritional diet to the senior citizens who are unable to do that for themselves. This scheme under the **poverty alleviation programme** provides 10 kg of free nutritional diet every month for the aged citizens of the above classification.

Critical evaluation of poverty alleviation programmes  
There are conflicting views about the success and failure of the **poverty alleviation programme in India**. Some think that it succeeded in alleviating poverty to some extent, and some think that this didn't help. Here is a **critical evaluation of poverty alleviation programmes** in India during the pre-reform and post-reform periods.

Pre-reform phase (1947-1990)

After the independence of the country, there was no such concentration on the economic strategies for the alleviation of poverty from the country for straight two decades. The scholars were of the view that industrialization will have a prolonged effect on the economy and will help in alleviating poverty in India. But sadly this did not happen in the economy. However, the evils of low per capita income, high population growth rate and demand-supply mismatch generated more difficulties in the country. The government after all this took some steps and started plenty of programmes like IRDP, NREP, RLEGP and TRYSEM. Failingly, the government languished in classifying poor people.

Post-reform Period (1991 onwards)

During the eighth 5-year plan (after the economic reforms), the creation of employment reliefs and strengthening productivity were the two tasks focused on by the government. But the main issue was its result could only be visible in the medium and long-term phases. The high growth rate during this period generated income for the government which was further used to finance the **poverty alleviation programmes**. Succeeding five-year plans also did a great job in alleviating poverty from India to some extent where they highlighted faster, sustainable and comprehensive growth as their central objective. To, this plethora of **poverty alleviation programmes** are availing basic facilities so that our country could get rid of poverty.

### Conclusion

Poverty is defined in terms of income, expenditure and nutritional value (calorie intake). Poverty is more of social marginalisation of an individual, household or group in the community or society rather than inadequacy of income to fulfill the basic needs. The goal of poverty alleviation programme should aim merely at the increasing of the income level of individual, household or group but generally marginalised in the development process of the country. The country cannot claim economic growth when sections of the people are marginalised to the periphery of the society. Poverty, therefore, is a complex phenomenon of many 77 dimensions but not merely the economic dimension. So, the government should provide better development programme

facilities, so that people living below poverty line can improve their livelihood. It also suggests that Poverty alleviation programmes should also take up the issue of poverty from the social and economic perspectives. Impact assessment offers potential as the tools for lowering poverty, increasing energy and for renewing the field of development cooperation. More analytical assessment can be employed to support worldwide local democracy in the face of the globalized corporate power. Such assessment can be used to measure and promote substantial, sustainable gains of the poor in terms of money and power. Resent works on impact indicators at the micro and macro levels especially in the areas of local economic development, gendered development and institutional capacity building can be consolidated and extended in the service of impact assessment. This can also be used to strengthen the design methods to place full control or at least shared control in the hands of citizens at the best in the evaluation of development interventions and more especially in poverty alleviation assessments. In India, poverty has certainly been reduced, but the result is not that widespread or to that aimed level with the **poverty alleviation programmes**. The increasing gaps between the rural and urban parts create complicated challenges for the government as well as the society as a whole. However, the government cannot only work in this aspect. We should also do our parts at the individual levels to focus on education, empowerment of the weaker sections of the society, helping weaker sections financially, etc. The country has to go an extended way for the complete alleviation of poverty from India.

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