

## 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."<sup>[1]</sup>

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)".<sup>[2]</sup>

### 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'.<sup>[3]</sup>

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."<sup>[4]</sup>

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".<sup>[5]</sup> the focus of the Government always remains on alleviating the condition of the people living in rural areas.

As the majority of people in India remain in rural areas where the basic amenities are not available to them they constitute most of the poor people in the country. "India has about 33% of the world's poor and 42% of India's population falls below the poverty line (BPL)".<sup>[6]</sup> According to the C Rangarajan panel, in 2011-12, 'Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Manipur, Jharkhand, Bihar and Assam were among the poorest states where over 40 per cent of people were below poverty line; 47.9 per cent people were poor in Chhattisgarh followed by 46.7 per cent in Manipur and 45.9 per cent in Odisha. The poor population was 44.3 per cent in Madhya Pradesh, 42.4 per cent in Jharkhand, 41.3 per cent Bihar and 40.9 per cent in Assam'.<sup>[7]</sup>

The situation does not seem to have improved. "216.5 million People in rural areas are poor and still, close to one third of the total population in India lives below the poverty line and majority of poor lives in villages and rural India. India's the poorest state is Chhattisgarh where 40% of the population lives below the poverty line. 61% of poor population of India lives in seven states Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Though 30% of rural population lives in a chronic condition of poverty but in the last three decades some improvement in the number has been seen because of antipoverty schemes and migration from rural to urban areas. Scheduled castes and tribes are the worst sufferers of rural poverty".<sup>[8]</sup>

The Planning Commission on its part has also revised the poverty line for rural as well as urban areas. "The new poverty line for rural areas is Rs 27 and for urban areas it is Rs 30 per day. Rural economy massively relies on agriculture. But farming in India depends upon unpredictable monsoon leading to erratic yield. Hence water shortage, bad weather conditions and reoccurring droughts are also the reasons of poverty in rural areas. Extreme poverty compels many farmers to commit suicide. Many rural areas are so poor that these even lack the basic facilities of sanitation, infrastructure, communication, and education. The rural economy is becoming stagnated and with this India's overall economy is not growing at a pace with which it should be. There is not just a one cause of poverty but many which lead to the vivacious cycle of poverty".<sup>ibid-[9]</sup>

### **National Poverty Reduction Policies and Legal Framework**

The Government at national level has made attempts for removing poverty of people. Many plans are devised and many schemes are implemented to improve the condition of people. "National poverty reduction policy and strategies in India are encapsulated in the Five Year Plans. The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007 – 2012) aims at faster economic growth with inclusion so that poorer and more vulnerable sections of the population are also able to benefit from it. The Twelfth Five Year Plan is currently being formulated with a consultative process, and aims to sharpen its focus on inclusion and poverty reduction. This would include, by way of decentralization, increasing the effective powers of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), as also recommended by the 13th Finance Commission."<sup>[10]</sup>

### **Major Anti-Poverty Programmes**

Rural development has been a thrust area for the national government. The Government through different development schemes not only brings improvement in rural condition but

also tries to provide basic amenities to the rural people. All these programs aim at rural development as well as poverty alleviation. "The rural developmental programmes initiated to reduce the poverty and unemployment, to improve the health and educational status and to fulfill the basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing of the rural population. To improve the conditions of rural people, Government of India launched some schemes through the planning commission of India such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Rastriya Sama Vikas Yojana (RSVY), 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) and TRYSEM scheme, Pradhan Mantri Jandhan yojana, Antyodaya plan., Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana, Digital India Programm, etc. All these schemes are aimed to reduce the gap between rural and urban people, which would help reduce imbalances and speed up the development process".<sup>[11]</sup>

### **Integrated Rural Development Programme**

"The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), which was introduced in 1978-79 and universalized from 2nd October, 1980, aimed at providing assistance to the rural poor in the form of subsidy and bank credit for productive employment opportunities through successive plan periods. In order to take care of the specific needs of the rural population, sub programmes of IRDP such as Training for Rural Youth for Self-employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA), and Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY) were introduced. These schemes were, however, implemented as 'standalone programmes', an approach, which substantially detracted from their effectiveness. On 1st April, 1999, the IRDP and allied programmes were merged into a single programme known as Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY). The SGSY emphasizes on organizing the rural poor into self-help groups, capacity building, planning of activity clusters, infra-structure support, technology, credit and marketing linkages."<sup>[12]</sup>

**Food for Work Programme:** The Food for Work Programme was started in 2000-01 as a component of EAS. It was first launched in eighth drought affected states of Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Uttaranchal. It aims at enhancing food security through wage employment. Food grains are supplied to states free of cost, however, the supply of food grains from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) god owns has been slow.<sup>ibid-13</sup> "Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) was started in 2001 with an objective of providing employment for the rural poor following.

Pradhanmantri Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY) was started in year 2000 and its main focus was village level development especially in five areas including primary health, primary education, housing, rural roads and drinking water and nutrition.

1. National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) initiated in 2006 for providing legal guarantee for 100

days of wage employment. Providing employment and creating asset were the main objective of this scheme.

2. Antodaya Anna Yojana initiated in 2000 with an objective of providing food securities to poor families.
3. National Housing Bank Voluntary Deposit Scheme started in 1991 to make use of black money for constructing low cost housing for the poor.

Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) started in 1982 for providing appropriate opportunities of self-employment to the rural women living below the poverty line”.[14]

### Rural Poverty: The Estimates by Planning Commission

The Planning Commission has played a vital role in the development sector in post-independent India. It used to give directions for an all-round development in the country. “The Planning Commission is the nodal agency in the Government of India for estimation of poverty at national and state levels. The poverty line used in per capita consumption expenditure level which meets the per capita daily calorie requirement of 2400 kcal in rural areas and 2100 kcal in urban areas along with a minimum of non-food expenditure. The monetary equivalent of these norms i.e. poverty line for the year 1973-74 was estimated as consumer expenditure of Rs.49.09 and Rs. 56.64 per capita per month in rural and urban areas, respectively The national level rural and urban poverty lines were updated for subsequent years using state-specific Consumer Price Index of Agricultural Laborers (CPIAL) for rural poverty line and Consumer Price Index of Industrial Workers (CPIIW) for urban poverty line.

The estimates of poverty are made using the large sample survey data on household consumer expenditure conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The state-specific poverty ratios are worked out from state-specific poverty lines and distribution of persons by expenditure groups obtained from the NSS data on consumer expenditure. The poverty ratio at all-India level is obtained as the weighted average of the state wise poverty ratios. [15]

There have been many criteria and methodologies for determining the poverty level in the country. “For 2011-12, for rural areas the national poverty line using the Tendulkar methodology is estimated at Rs. 816 per capita per month and Rs. 1,000 per capita per month in urban areas. Thus, for a family of five, the all India poverty line in terms of consumption expenditure would amount to about Rs. 4,080 per month in rural areas and Rs. 5,000 per month in urban areas. These poverty lines would vary from State to State because of inter-state price differentials. [16]

Accordingly, “The percentage of persons below the Poverty Line in 2011-12 has been estimated as 25.7% in rural areas, 13.7% in urban areas and 21.9% for the country as a whole. The respective ratios for the rural and urban areas were 41.8%

and 25.7% and 37.2% for the country as a whole in 2004-05. It was 50.1% in rural areas, 31.8% in urban areas and 45.3% for the country as a whole in 1993-94. In 2011-12, India had 270 million persons below the Tendulkar Poverty Line as compared to 407 million in 2004-05, that is a reduction of 137 million persons over the seven year period.” Ibid- [17]

### Literature Review

Review of literature makes an attempt to review the available literature relate to Poverty Alleviation in the form of, volumes, dissertation, articles, research papers etc. Review of literature is the primary & secondary base of any research work. It clarifies the basic concepts and helpful to plan future research work. Review of literature not only gives information about the research so far done Poverty Alleviation but it also helps a new research is giving proper direction to his research. Therefore this chapter forms an important part of this study. Poverty Alleviation is related to the India.

### Methodology

In this research paper an attempt has been made to summarize the current state of knowledge about poverty and problems created by poverty. Also, an effort has been made to understand the national policies, and programs undertaken in India to remove poverty. The research paper is based on relevant secondary data which collected from papers and materials written by other writers found in different and journals. The Economic surveys and materials found in various websites and newspapers have also been utilized while writing the paper.

### Analysis of data according to population, sex ratio, literacy rate and below poverty line people

“Administrative Units: Census 2011 covered 35 States/Union Territories, 640 districts, 5,924 sub-districts, 7,935 Towns and 6, 40,867 Villages. In Census 2001, the corresponding figures were 593 Districts, 5,463 sub-Districts, 5,161 Towns and 6, 38,588 Villages. There is an increase of 47 Districts, 461 Sub Districts, 2774 Towns (242 Statutory and 2532 Census Towns) and 2279 Villages in Census 2011 as compared to Census 2001. [18]

‘The estimates of some state wise Total, Rural and Urban Population of Major State & during 2001 and 2011 Census (in millions) are given in Table 1. The some State wise (Total, Rural and Urban) Sex Ratio by Residence-Census 2001 and 2011 are given in Table-2. The some State wise Literacy Rate by Residence –Persons are given in Table-3.and some State wise Number and Percentage of Population below Poverty Line in 2009-10 and 2004-05 (By Tendulkar Methodology) are give in Table-4. [19]

### Analysis of data on the population

**Table 1:** Total, Rural and Urban Population of Major State & during 2001 and 2011 Census (in millions)

State	Population 2001			Population 2011		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Chhattisgarh	20.83	16.65	4.19	25.54	19.60	5.94
Madhya Pradesh	60.35	44.38	15.97	72.60	52.54	20.06
Uttar Pradesh	166.2	131.66	34.54	199.58	155.11	44.47
Bihar	83	74.32	8.68	103.80	11.73	92.08
Jharkhand	26.95	20.95	5.99	32.97	25.04	7.93

Source: <http://mhupa.gov.in/pdf/annual->

Reports/Annual\_Reprot\_English\_2012-13.pdf Annual Report 2012-2013 Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation Government of India.

**Population:** Total population of India was 1210.2 million according census of 2011. Of this, the rural population stands at 833.1 million and the urban population 377.1 million. In absolute numbers, the rural population has increased by 90.47 million and the urban population by 91.00 million in the last decade. Uttar Pradesh has the largest rural population of 155.11 million (18.62% of the country's rural population) whereas Maharashtra has the highest urban population of

50.83 million (13.48% of country's urban population) in the country. <sup>[20]</sup>

**Proportion of Population:** In percentage terms, the rural population formed 68.84% of the total population with the urban population constituting 31.16% (increase of 3.35%). Himachal Pradesh (89.96%) has the largest proportion of rural population, while Delhi (97.50%) has the highest proportion of urban population. The EAG States have a lower percentage of urban population (21.13%) in comparison to non EAG States (39.66%). <sup>Ibid- [21]</sup>

#### Analysis of data on the sex ratio of rural – urban people

**Table 2:** State wise (Total, Rural and Urban) Sex Ratio by Residence-Census 2001 and 2011

State	Sex Ratio - 2001 (No. of Females per 1000 Males)			Sex Ratio - 2011 (No. of Females per 1000 Males)		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Chhattisgarh	989	1004	932	991	1002	956
Madhya Pradesh	919	927	898	930	936	916
Uttar Pradesh	898	904	876	908	914	888
Bihar	919	926	868	916	919	891
Jharkhand	941	962	870	947	960	908

Source: <http://mhupa.gov.in/pdf/annual->

Reports/Annual\_Reprot\_English\_2012-13.pdf Annual Report 2012-2013 Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation Government of India.

**Sex Ratio:** The Sex Ratio in the country which was 933 in 2001 has risen by 7 points to 940 in 2011. The increase in rural areas has been 1 point from 946 to 947. The same in urban areas has been 26 points from 900 to 926. Kerala has the highest sex ratio in total (1084), rural (1077) and urban (1091). In rural Chandigarh (691) and in urban, Daman & Diu

(550) show the lowest sex ratio in the country respectively. Eight states namely Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and 1 UT Lakshadweep show fall in the sex ratio in rural area and 2 UTs Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli in urban areas. <sup>Ibid- [22]</sup>

#### Analysis of data on literacy rate

**Table 3:** State wise Literacy Rate by Residence –Persons

State	Literacy Rate (Persons) 2001			Literacy Rate (Persons) 2011 *		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Chhattisgarh	64.66	60.48	80.58	71.04	66.76	84.79
Madhya Pradesh	63.74	57.80	79.39	70.63	65.29	84.09
Uttar Pradesh	56.27	52.53	69.75	69.72	67.55	77.01
Bihar	47.00	43.92	71.93	63.82	61.83	78.75
Jharkhand	53.56	45.74	79.14	67.63	62.40	83.30

Source: <http://mhupa.gov.in/pdf/annual->

Reports/Annual\_Reprot\_English\_2012-13.pdf Annual Report 2012-2013 Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation Government of India.

**Literacy Rate:** The Literacy Rate of India as per the Provisional Population Totals of Census 2011 is 74.04. In rural areas the Literacy Rate is 68.91 and in urban areas it is 84.98. The decadal change works out to 9.21 points - 10.17 points in rural areas and 5.06 points in urban areas respectively. The male Literacy Rate which is 82.14 (Rural-78.57; Urban-89.67) is higher than the female Literacy Rate of 65.46 (Rural- 58.75; Urban-79.92). The increase in female literacy rate is significantly higher in all areas i.e. total (11.79 points), rural (12.62 points) and urban (7.06 points) in comparison to corresponding male literacy rates - total (6.88

points), rural (7.87) and urban (3.40 points) over the decade. It is significant to note that the gap in literacy rate among males and females has reduced to 16.68 in the country. The gap is 19.82 points in rural areas and 9.75 points in urban areas. Kerala (92.92) ranks first in rural areas whereas Mizoram (98.1) ranks first in urban areas. As far as Male literacy rate is concerned, Kerala (95.29) ranks first in rural areas whereas Mizoram (98.67) ranks first in urban areas. Rajasthan (46.25) has recorded lowest female literacy rate in rural areas, whereas, Jammu & Kashmir (70.19) has the lowest female literacy rate in urban areas. Lowest male literacy rate in rural areas has been recorded in Arunachal Pradesh (68.79) and in urban areas in Uttar Pradesh (81.75). <sup>Ibid- [23]</sup>

#### Analysis of data on below poverty line people

**Table 4:** State wise Number and Percentage of Population below Poverty Line in 2009-10 and 2004-05 (By Tendulkar Methodology)

State	2009-10		2004-05	
	No. of Persons (Lakh)	% age of Persons	No. of Persons (Lakh)	% age of Persons
Chhattisgarh	13.6	23.8	13.7	28.4
Madhya Pradesh	44.9	22.9	61.3	35.1
Uttar Pradesh	137.3	31.7	130.1	34.1
Bihar	44.8	39.4	42.8	43.7
Jharkhand	24.0	31.1	16	23.8

Source: [http://planningcommission.nic.in/news/press\\_pov1903.pdf](http://planningcommission.nic.in/news/press_pov1903.pdf)

Press Note on Poverty Estimates, 2009-10 Government of India Planning Commission March 2012 Poverty Estimate For 2009-10 New Delhi, 19th March, 2012.

It can be seen that Bihar remains at the top with regard to the number of persons below poverty line, though the cases of other states are not so satisfactory. To improve the condition, it is desirable that extra efforts are too made as the situation has not changed significantly.

### Role of administration and NGOs in poverty alleviation

In a country like India, where the non-government sector is not so improved, the government plays the most crucial role in development activities. It acts as the main agent of development. Hence, the role of administration in any public activity can never be ignored. "Successful implementation of these programmes requires appropriate policy framework, adequate funds, and effective delivery mechanism. The success of these programmes ultimately depends on the capability of the delivery system to absorb and utilize the funds in a cost-effective manner. An effective and responsive district level field machinery with a high degree of commitment, motivation, and professional competence and, above all, integrity has been recognized as one of the prerequisites for successful implementation of an anti-poverty strategy. An effective governance system has to ensure people's participation at various stages of formulation and implementation of the programmes.<sup>[24]</sup> Unless the government takes a proactive role in removing poverty in the country the condition of poor can never be improved.

However, it is not to say that the non-government sector is without any impact on poverty alleviation. The Non-Governmental Organizations also provide support to the government machineries in development activities and help the people for improving their condition. "The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) have been playing an active role in building up people's awareness and providing support to the governmental agencies and the Panchayati Raj Institutions in executing projects for development in rural areas. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have been given a constitutional role in the governance of the country. PRIs can play an important role in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the schemes and reducing. The NGOs can play an important role in capacity building, access to information, organization of rural poor in self-help groups and increasing their awareness and capabilities. All these initiatives have good governance as their ultimate goal. Will be possible for the country to achieve the goals set in the Tenth Five Year Plan within the time frame. <sup>Ibid</sup> [25]

### Conclusion

Poverty alleviation in India is a complex problem and it is not easy to root it out easily. For removing the poverty of people, especially the rural people, it is necessary that all the stake holders, the government machineries, the non-government organizations, and the civil societies must make efforts sincerely. Without the active involvement of such actors it is not possible to eradicate the disadvantages of people and achieve poverty alleviation.

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