

Critical Assessment of the Poverty Alleviation Programmes of India

Ever since independence, the government has always sought to uplift the downtrodden section of the society with many Poverty Alleviation Programmes. The results of such a program have been a mixed bag of sorts. This article aims to critically assess these results.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes of India

Before we go critically analysis of the programmes, it is important to know about some of them in brief:

Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana

Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) is the restructured, streamlined and comprehensive version of the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY). It was started on 1 April 1999. The main aim of this programme was the development of rural areas.

National Pension Scheme (NPS)

The National Pension System (NPS) is a pension scheme sponsored by the government that was started in 2004 for all government employees. The scheme was made open to all citizens in 2009. It is a voluntary and a long-term retirement scheme.

National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS)

This scheme was started in August 1995 . This scheme is sponsored by the state government. It was transferred to the state sector scheme after 2002–03. It is under the community and rural department.

Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awaas Yojana

This Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awaas Yojana scheme is aimed at creating housing for everyone. It was initiated in 1985. It aimed at creating 20 lakh housing units out of which 13 lakhs were in rural areas. This scheme also would give out loans to people at subsidized rates to make houses. It was started in 1999–2000. In 1999–2000, ₹1438.39 crore was used for this scheme and about 7.98 lakh units were built. In 2000-01 a central outlay of ₹1710.00 crores was provided for this scheme. It improved the standard of living of rural areas:health,primary education,drinking water,housing,roads.

How effective the Poverty Alleviation Programmes have been?

Efforts at poverty alleviation have borne fruit in that for the first time since independence, the percentage of absolute poor in some states is now well below the national average. Despite various strategies to alleviate poverty, hunger, malnourishment, illiteracy and lack of basic amenities continue to be a common feature in many parts of India. Though the policy towards poverty alleviation has evolved in a progressive manner, over the last five and a half decades, it has not undergone any radical transformation. You can find change in nomenclature, integration or mutations of programmes.

However, none resulted in any radical change in the ownership of assets, process of production and improvement of basic amenities to the needy. Scholars, while assessing these programmes, state three major areas of concern which prevent their successful implementation. Due to unequal distribution of land and other assets, the benefits from direct poverty alleviation programmes have been appropriated by the non-poor.

- Compared to the magnitude of poverty, the amount of resources allocated for these programmes is not sufficient. Moreover, these programmes depend mainly on government and bank officials for their implementation.
- Since such officials are ill motivated, inadequately trained, corruption prone and vulnerable to pressure from a variety of local elites, the resources are inefficiently used and wasted. There is also non-participation of local level institutions in programme implementation.
- Government schemes have also failed to address the vast majority of vulnerable people who are living on or just above the poverty line. It also reveals that high growth alone is not sufficient to reduce poverty. Without the active participation of the poor, successful implementation of any programme is not possible.

Conclusion

Poverty can effectively be eradicated only when the poor start contributing to growth by their active involvement in the growth process. This is possible through a process of social mobilisation, encouraging poor people to participate and get them empowered. This will also help create employment opportunities which may lead to increase in levels of income, skill development, health and literacy. Moreover, it is necessary to identify poverty stricken areas and provide infrastructure such as schools, roads, power, telecom, IT services, training institutions etc.

