

BLOCK 2

SOCIAL POLICIES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN SOCIAL SECTOR

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Unit 3 Poverty Alleviation

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UNIT 3 POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Structure

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- 3.3 Current Level of Poverty in India
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3.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the poverty estimation methods practiced in India; and
- highlight the current level of poverty.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Given the limited resources, reliable estimation of poverty is the first step towards eradication of poverty, as a basic input for design, implementation, and monitoring of anti-poverty programmes. Poverty measurement is also important to serve, as a barometer of the extent of the success of strategies for inclusive growth and poverty reduction.

Poverty can be defined, as a condition in, which an individual or household lacks the financial resources to afford a basic minimum standard of living. According to the World Bank, Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being and comprises many dimensions. It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life.

The conventional approach to measuring poverty is to specify a minimum expenditure (or income) required to purchase a basket of goods and services necessary to satisfy basic human needs. This expenditure is called the poverty line. The basket of goods and services necessary to satisfy basic human needs is the Poverty Line Basket (PLB). Poverty can be measured in terms of the number of people living below this line (with the incidence of poverty expressed, as the head count ratio (HCR); or the poverty ratio - number of poor to the total population expressed, as percentage).

Based on the methodology suggested by the Expert Groups/Committees set up by the erstwhile Planning Commission from time to time, India has undertaken periodic assessments of the incidence of poverty since the 1960s.

The poverty ratio in India has been measured from an exogenously determined poverty line quantified in terms of per capita consumption expenditure over a month and the class distribution of persons obtained from the large sample survey of consumer expenditure data of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). Households with consumption expenditures below the poverty line are said to be 'Below the Poverty Line (BPL)' and deemed poor. Consumption is measured in terms of a collection of goods and services known, as Poverty Line Baskets (PLB).

3.2 POVERTY ESTIMATION

In India, the first official rural and urban poverty lines at the national level were introduced in 1979 by Y. K. Alagh Committee and official poverty counts began for the first time. Later, in 1993, D. T. Lakdawala Committee extended these poverty lines to states and allowing official poverty counts over time. In 2005, recognizing that the rural poverty line was too low, the government appointed the Tendulkar committee to take a fresh look at the poverty lines.

In this Section, we will discuss about the Tendulkar Expert Group, Consumption Expenditure Surveys, and Committee- Socio-Economic and Caste Census, all of whom had given three different methods of estimating poverty in India.

To begin with is the Tendulkar Expert Group.

The Tendulkar Committee 2009 suggested several changes to the way poverty was measured. Firstly, it recommended a shift away from basing the poverty lines from calorie norms used in all poverty estimations since 1979 and towards target nutritional outcomes instead.

Secondly, instead of two separate PLBs for rural and urban poverty lines, it recommended a uniform all-India urban PLB across rural and urban India.

Thirdly, it recommended using Mixed Reference Period (MRP)¹ based estimates, as opposed to Uniform Reference Period (URP) based estimates used in earlier methods for estimating poverty.

It recommended incorporation of private expenditure on health and education while estimating poverty. It validated the poverty lines by checking the adequacy of actual private consumption expenditure per capita on food, education, and health by comparing them with normative expenditures consistent with nutritional, educational, and health outcomes respectively.

¹ From 1999-2000 onwards, the NSSO switched to an MRP method, which measures consumption of five low-frequency items (clothing, footwear, durables, education expenditure, and institutional health expenditure) over the previous year, and all other items over the previous 30 days.

- **Use of Consumption Expenditure Surveys**

Poverty line estimation in India has been based on the consumption expenditure and not on the income levels due to difficulties in assessing incomes of self-employed people, daily wage laborers, large fluctuations in income due to seasonal factors, additional side incomes, as well as, data collection difficulties faced in largely rural and informal economy of India. Since households may be able to access credit markets or household savings and thereby smoothen their consumptions to some degree, consumption expenditures may be able to provide a better basis for determining a household's actual standard of living. Hence, most of the Poverty Estimation Committees proposed that per capita consumption expenditure or household expenses were the right statistical choice for calculating poverty in India.

Incidence of poverty was estimated by the erstwhile Planning Commission on the basis of the large sample surveys on household consumer expenditure conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) on a quinquennial basis. The NSSO regularly conducts survey on household consumer expenditure, in which households are asked about their consumption of last 30 days and is taken, as the representative of general consumption. This was considered a much better data to estimate the incidence of poverty at national and state levels by adjusting for inter-state and inter-region differences in price changes over time. Hence, increasingly, reliance was placed on the NSSO's sample surveys on consumption expenditure by households, a much better method to adjust for inter-state and inter-region differences in price changes over time.

- **Dr. N. C. Saxena Committee- Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011**

In an effort to address various concerns regarding BPL Censuses, and reduce inclusion/exclusion errors, for the fourth BPL identification exercise, alternative targeting methodologies were proposed and debated. The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) appointed an expert committee chaired by Dr. N. C. Saxena to propose a new methodology for identifying BPL households. The Committee proposed a radical departure from previous BPL Censuses and recommended a three-fold classification of households into 'automatically excluded,' 'automatically included,' and 'others.'

Based on Saxena Committee's recommendations, in 2011, the MoRD launched the Socio- Economic and Caste Census (SECC) - a door-to-door enumeration across both rural and urban India collecting household-level socio-economic data. The Census was conducted by the States / UTs simultaneously for rural and urban areas under technical and financial support from the Government of India. This door to door respondent-based survey of rural and urban households in the country started in June 2011 and was completed in March 2016. SECC-2011 used the Census-2011 data, as its base data. The data was ratified by Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat. It captured data on households-individual particulars, housing, deprivation, employment, income, assets/amenities, and landownership.

The SECC 2011 ranked households in three categories:

- **Automatically Excluded:** Households meeting exclusion criteria-any of the households meeting 13 assets and income based parameters² are automatically excluded from welfare benefits;
- **Automatically Included:** Households satisfying inclusion criteria-any one of the households meeting 5 acute social destitution parameters³ are automatically included for welfare benefits;
- **Others:** Others are ranked on the basis of 7 indicators of deprivation⁴ and households with the highest deprivation score will be first included in the BPL list.

The Government has used SECC data for identification of beneficiary households while implementing its social welfare programmes including Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Gramin, Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission, Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana-Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana, and Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. The SECC data is also being used by state governments to implement National Food Security Act.

Use of SECC data in the implementation of Government programmes allows for:

- Evidence based developmental interventions.
- The programme specific priority list is generated keeping in view the fiscal space of the welfare programme for targeting specific pro-poor interventions.
- The selection of beneficiaries gets validated through Gram Sabhas, while identity is established through Aadhaar.
- This leads to selection of right beneficiaries and minimizes duplication and fraud.

This has substantially enhanced the effectiveness of government's efforts to tackle multi-dimensional poverty, going beyond income or expenditure based poverty.

² Vehicle, Kisan Credit Card with credit limit of Rs. 50k and above, any member who is a government employee, any member is earning more than Rs.10k per month, paying income tax, paying professional tax, house has 'pucca' (solid) walls and roof + three or more rooms, owns a refrigerator, owns landline phone, owns irrigated land above a limit.

Score based ranking of rural households with 13 socio-economic parameters on various aspects like size of landholding, type of house, availability of clothing, ownership of consumer durables, food security, access to sanitation, education attainment, etc. exist, each parameter having a score between 0-4.

³ Households without shelter, destitute/ living on alms, manual scavengers, legally released bonded laborers, and primitive tribal groups.

⁴ Households with only one room with no solid walls and roof, Households with no adult male aged 15-59, Female-headed households, Households with differently-able members and with no able bodied member, SC/ST Households, Households with no literate member above the age of 25, Landless households deriving a major part of their income from manual casual labor.

3.3 CURRENT LEVEL OF POVERTY IN INDIA

As per the Global Statistics' 'Poverty in India Statistics 2021' Report, India is one of the world's fastest growing major economies. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF), at the growth rate of 11.5%, India is going to be the fastest growing economy in 2021. The last official estimate of poverty in 2011-12 was released by the erstwhile Planning Commission at 21.92%, which was estimated using Tendulkar Committee approach. After that, no estimates have been officially released. SDG 2019 Report by NITI also mentions Tendulkar Poverty Line of 21.92% adopted in 2011, as the official poverty line.

It is interesting to know that Multidimensional Poverty Index ⁵(MPI) Report 2019 show India's poverty line, as 21.2% (for the year 2011- 12), based on World Bank's 1.90\$ poverty line for extreme poverty, quite close to Tendulkar Committee based Poverty line. Global MPI 2020 Report indicates that India was 62nd among 107 countries with an MPI score of 0.123.

With the sudden outbreak of the corona virus in early 2020 pushed many into poverty in India. It is estimated that 150-199 million additional people will fall into poverty at the end of 2021. Due to the pandemic, there were job cuts on a large-scale.

According to the latest Reports 2020 of the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), around 7 million jobs were lost in one year. The consumption expenditure has come down and the public spending on development was sluggish. So poverty in India was expected to rise in the coming days. As per the real-time data from World Poverty Clock⁶, 7% of the Indian population is living in extreme poverty.

At present India's poverty statistics shows that from among the total population of 1,392,506,368 in 2021, 97,697,747, that is, 6 percent of people live in extreme poverty. Of them, a total of 44,806,455 are the males and 52,891,292 are the females. Females are more affected than males. Also, the age group from 0-19 is the most affected by extreme poverty. This can lead the youngsters to malnutrition and illiteracy.

Indian government's spending on rural welfare schemes is helping in a big way to reduce national poverty. By 2030, the target of government is to eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured, as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.

⁵ MPI seeks to measure poverty across its multiple dimensions and in effect complements existing poverty statistics based on per capita consumption expenditure. It enables drawing up of comprehensive Action Plans with larger goals of improving India's position in the global MPI rankings. It has three equally weighted dimensions-health, education, and standard of living. These three dimensions are represented by 12 indicators such as years in schooling, school attendance, nutrition, drinking water, sanitation, hygiene, bank accounts among others.

⁶ It provides for real time estimates until 2030 for almost every country of the world. It monitors progress against Ending Extreme Poverty. It is a concept developed by economists to get a grip about extreme poverty across the globe. It was launched in May 2017 at a conference in Berlin organized by the Brookings Institute.

3.4 COMBATING POVERTY: A WAY FORWARD

New Approaches

Two new approaches mentioned below can pave way for poverty elimination in the country.

- **Targeting Five Poorest Families in Each Village**

1. SECC based BPL list may be used for selection of poor families.
2. Gram Panchayat to ensure all Government program benefits reach them.
3. A modest cash transfer for a pre-specified time may top these benefits.
4. Aim to ensure the target families become capable of earning and sustaining above-poverty level of income within 5-7 years.
5. Similar efforts in urban areas targeting 100 families in a municipality.

- **Towards Cash Transfers: Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar, Mobile (JAM) Trinity**

JAM could play a vital role in widening the reach of government to the vulnerable sections as:

1. Jan Dhan Yojana promise to eventually revolutionize the anti- poverty programmes by replacing the current cumbersome and leaky distribution of benefits under various schemes by the direct benefit transfers (DBT).
2. Aadhar linked accounts permit aggregation of the information; the government would have an excellent database to assess the total volume of benefits accruing to each household.
3. It could pave the way for replacing countless schemes with consolidated cash transfers except in cases in, which there are other compelling reasons to continue with in-kind transfers.

Dr. Seema Gaur and Dr. N Srinivasa Rao in their working paper namely 'Poverty Measurement in India: A Status Update' have discussed about the way forward in terms of two critical issues of poverty measurement and poverty elimination. These are the two critical issues in the discourse on poverty in India.

Poverty measures compare people in a society, in order to assess the extent of unacceptable disadvantages that exist. However, there exist certain imperfections that stem primarily from two factors: data limitations and the diversity of human lives being assessed more so in a vast country likes India. Further, perceptions of what defines basic human needs vary widely according to income, level of development, sociopolitical beliefs and other factors. This is why views on how the poverty line should be defined vary widely. This makes the choice of a poverty line difficult. Poverty lines have to be recalibrated depending on changes in income, consumption patterns, and prices. In India, poverty measurement has repeatedly led to contentious debates on poverty line. Despite these

shortcomings, conceptually having a poverty line⁷ and related poverty estimates help to concentrate the public policy discourse around an agreed set of numbers as well as to track the progress in combating poverty.

Over time, priorities have shifted with development in India. Today, aspiring poor seek betterment in education, health, housing, skills and consumption, and not merely minimum food and shelter. Therefore, poverty is now not just about basic food to keep body and soul together but about living standards -sanitation, housing, piped water, electricity, education, health, and jobs. Poverty line assessment if it were to be done presently cannot be based on minimum expenditure on subsistence basket as done in the past. Further, the current corona pandemic has underscored the criticality of certain "essentials" - access to quality healthcare, education and awareness, water and sanitation facilities, adequate nutrition, and the need for living spaces where social distancing can be practiced. The World Bank has classified India as a lower middle-income country and the corresponding poverty line would be PPP \$3.2 (2011 prices), which translates into roughly a consumption level of Rs 75 per person per day. Over time, India will need to adjust to the new reality of the transition to a lower middle- income country, in which poverty does not mean living at the edge of hunger but, rather, lack of income to take advantage of the opportunities thrown up by a growing economy.

Further, deprivations in different areas are positively correlated with one another. It may be people who lack resources, also lack education, access to sanitation and clean water and healthcare. These intersections of deprivation also add critically important dimensions to understanding poverty, and in directing public policy to tackle it. In India, there is also a growing recognition for the need for a multidimensional approach to move towards the vision of a poverty free India. Global MPI is already providing useful information on deprivations in various areas and at disaggregated level. Current project to develop Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) spearheaded by NITI may be expected to provide poverty indices at national, states and lower levels of granularity with focus on multidimensionality. While multidimensional and income measures of poverty capture different and sometimes divergent information, using them in a complementary manner may provide a more complete view of poverty and better insights for policy action.

Studies of poverty have generally focused on the state of being poor, rather than on the 'dynamics of poverty' – movement into and out of poverty, and the processes and factors that determine this. Why are a large number of people in India persistently poor? What enables those who are poor to escape from poverty? Why do a large number of people who are not poor become poor?

⁷ Most of the existing measures of poverty, viz., Head Count Ratio (HCR), Poverty Gap Index (PGI), Squared Poverty Gap Index (SPGI), Sen's Index of Poverty (SPI), FosterGreer-Thorbecke Index (FGTPI) etc., depend on the poverty line.

Studying poverty dynamics to answer these questions can bring in a new understanding of poverty and well-being.

Second aspect relates to focus on **poverty elimination**. Evidence shows that India is successfully addressing multidimensional poverty through diverse range of interventions. Alongside the average level of poverty, some of the important socioeconomic indicators such as literacy, education, and health have shown considerable improvement. Global MPI reports indicate what has succeeded and where are the significant gaps for future policy formulation. However, the progress in poverty reduction and improvement in the socioeconomic indicators in India has been marked by substantial inequalities. Poverty is concentrated both spatially and among social and economic groups, and those most vulnerable to poverty include landless laborers, marginal farmers, socially backward classes, and people living in remote areas. Global MPI reports have also highlighted wide disparities across states, districts and social groups. The two-fold strategy of enabling the economy grows rapidly (with high employment intensity) on sustained basis and attacking poverty and address disparities through social welfare programmes remains relevant. Ministry of Rural Development's programmes focusing both on alleviating the poverty of households through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, (PMAY), Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY), and the poverty of regions through Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) are on right track.

The role of rural infrastructure in poverty reduction cannot be overemphasized. Better infrastructure promotes the shift from low-productivity casual labor in agriculture to more productive casual work in the non-farm sector. It is also a key to higher wages and assists in improving literacy rates and school attendance. Thus, the poverty reduction payoffs to higher investment in rural infrastructure especially in backward poor states are likely to be high. Mission Antyodaya 2020⁸ findings have comprehensively highlighted the gaps in socio-, economic infrastructure at the Gram Panchayat level and may be used for interventions that address Gram Panchayat specific gaps. Markets and value chains for products can diversify rural economies and bring down poverty on an even faster scale.

⁸ In India, 8.88 crore households are found to be deprived and poor households as per Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) of 2011 from the perspective of multi-dimensional deprivations such as shelterlessness, landlessness, households headed by single women, SC/ST household, or disabled member in the family. These households require targeted interventions under government's various schemes and programmes in areas such as wage creation, skill generation, social security, education, health and nutrition, and livelihood creation. Already, financial resources are allocated annually to impact lives of rural poor by several government ministries/ departments including Ministry of Rural Development in schemes spanning rural wages, rural roads, skill development, health, education, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, environment, etc.

In this context, 'Mission Antyodaya' seeks to converge government interventions with Gram Panchayats, as the basic unit for planning, by following a saturation approach by pooling resources - human and financial - to ensure sustainable livelihoods. It is a State-led initiative for rural transformation to make a real difference based on measurable outcomes to the lives of 1, 00, 00,000 households in 5,000 rural clusters or 50,000 Gram Panchayats in 1,000 days.

Gains in health, education and nutrition outcomes can be manifold through communitized approach to participatory development involving both PRIs and community organizations like the Women SHGs.

At global level also, India's success in addressing multidimensional poverty is critical for the realization of the ambitious sustainable development goals (SDGs) that aim to leave no one behind. As the use of evidence-based policy-making has become widely advocated, it is important to collect and use accurate data and relevant insights, to drive the design of welfare programmes as well as ascertain their impact. SECC 2011 has already proved its immense potential for beneficiaries targeting in several social welfare programmes. It needs to be updated at the earliest to avoid exclusion and inclusion errors, as data tends to become obsolete. A dynamic Social Registry would be highly useful to attainment of India's poverty elimination objectives. It would help policymakers make evidence-based decisions by identifying trends and intervention hotspots, which mean public resources officials could be directed more effectively. The more complete picture provided by the MPI would help monitor the effectiveness of poverty reduction efforts, to understand which components of multidimensional poverty are improving, and which are not.

Activity

Just set up a small group representing youth, and other sections of your community and discuss some of the measures of empowerment of poor people.

3.5 CONCLUSION

In this Unit, we have discussed various poverty estimation methods practiced in India. This is for the reason that poverty measurement serves, as a barometer of the extent of the success of strategies for inclusive growth and poverty reduction. **So, when we say poverty, it denotes, as per the World Bank, a pronounced deprivation in well-being and includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. It also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life.**

Based on the methodology suggested by the Expert Groups/Committees set up by the erstwhile Planning Commission from time to time, India has undertaken periodic assessments of the incidence of poverty since the 1960s. So far as the poverty estimation is concerned Tendulkar Expert Group (2009) recommended to a shift away from basing the poverty lines from calorie norms used in all poverty estimations, towards targeting nutritional outcomes instead. Besides instead of insisting on two separate PLBs for rural and urban poverty lines, it recommended a uniform all-India urban PLB across rural and urban India. It also suggested using Mixed Reference Period (MRP) based estimates for estimating poverty.

The other method was the use of consumption expenditure surveys. Such surveys were done, as they were able to provide a better basis for determining a

household's actual standard of living. Incidence of poverty was estimated by the erstwhile Planning Commission on the basis of the large sample surveys on household consumer expenditure conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) on a quinquennial basis. The NSSO regularly conducts survey on household consumer expenditure, in which households are asked about their consumption of last 30 days and is taken, as the representative of general consumption. This was considered a much better data to estimate the incidence of poverty at national and state levels by adjusting for inter-state and inter-region differences in price changes over time.

Committee on Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 was constituted to address various concerns regarding BPL Censuses and reduce inclusion/exclusion errors. Dr. N. C. Saxena headed the Committee that proposed a new methodology for identifying BPL households. The Committee proposed a radical departure from previous BPL Censuses and recommended a three-fold classification of households into 'automatically excluded,' 'automatically included,' and 'others.'

The Unit also discussed the official estimate of poverty in India. Last official estimate of poverty in 2011-12 was released by the erstwhile Planning Commission at 21.92%, which was estimated using Tendulkar Committee approach. SDG 2019 Report by NITI also mentions Tendulkar Poverty Line of 21.92% adopted in 2011, as the official poverty line.

The way forward in combating poverty is also mentioned with SECC 2011 already proving its immense potential for beneficiaries targeting in several social welfare programmes.

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UNIT 4 FOOD SECURITY

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 National Food Security Act, 2013
- 4.3 Salient Features
- 4.4 Public Distribution System
- 4.5 Appraisal
- 4.6 Suggestions
- 4.7 Conclusion
- 4.8 References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the salient features of National Food Security Act 2013;
- explain the public distribution system in India;
- appraise the PDS; and
- suggest measures to overcome the limitations of the same.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The right to food and its variations, is a human right protecting the right of people to feed themselves in dignity, implying that sufficient food is available, that people have the means to access it, and that it adequately meets the individual's dietary needs. The right to food protects the right of all human beings to be free from hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition. The right to food does not imply that governments have an obligation to hand out free food to everyone who wants it, or a right to be fed. However, if people are deprived of access to food for reasons beyond their control, for example, because they are in detention, in times of war or after natural disasters, the right requires the government to provide food directly.

The right is derived from the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which has 170 state parties, as of April 2020. States that sign the Covenant agree to take steps to the maximum of their available resources to achieve progressively the full realization of the right to adequate food, both nationally and internationally.

The Food Corporation of India (FCI) was established in 1965 for the purpose of procurement, storage, and distribution of food grains. It has been playing a major role in the food security of India by ensuring that all people are free from hunger and malnutrition.

The National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA 2013) converts into legal entitlements for existing food security programmes of the Government of India. It includes the Midday Meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services Scheme, and the Public Distribution System. In 2017-18, over Rs. 1500 billion (7.6% of the government's total expenditure) have been allocated to provide food subsidies under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).

In this Unit, we will begin the discussion with the National Food Security Act 2013.

4.2 NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT, 2013

The National Food Security Act 2013 (NFSA 2013) (also 'Right to Food Act'), which aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two thirds of the country's 1.2 billion people (presently 1.32 billion). It was signed into law on September 12 2013, retroactive to July 5 2013.

The intent of the National Food Security Act is spelled out in the Lok Sabha committee report, The National Food Security Bill, 2011, Twenty Seventh Report, which states, "Food security means availability of sufficient food grains to meet the domestic demand as well as access, at the individual level, to adequate quantities of food at affordable prices." The Report adds, "The proposed legislation marks a paradigm shift in addressing the problem of food security – from the current welfare approach to a right based approach. About two thirds (approx 67%) of the population will be entitled to receive subsidized food grains under Targeted Public Distribution System. In a country, where almost 40% of children are undernourished, the importance of the scheme increases significantly."

The NFSA 2013 converts into legal entitlements for existing food security programmes of the Government of India. It includes the Midday Meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services Scheme, and the Public Distribution System. The Midday Meal Scheme and the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme are universal in nature whereas the PDS will reach about two-thirds of the population (75% in rural areas and 50% in urban areas).

Under the provisions, beneficiaries of the PDS are entitled to 5 kilograms per person per month of cereals at the following prices:

- Rice at ₹3 per kg
- Wheat at ₹2 per kg
- Coarse grains (millet) at ₹1 per kg.

Further, the NFSA 2013 recognizes maternity entitlements. Pregnant women, lactating mothers, and certain categories of children are eligible for daily free cereals.

4.3 SALIENT FEATURES

Some of the salient features of the NFSA 2013 are mentioned, as follows:

- **Coverage and entitlement under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)**

Up to 79.56% of the rural population and 64.43% of the urban population will be covered under TPDS, with uniform entitlement of 5 kg of the items per person per month. However, since Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households constitute poorest of the poor, and are presently entitled to 35 kg per household per month, entitlement of existing AAY households will be protected at 35 kg per household per month.

- **State-wise coverage**

Corresponding to the all India coverage of 75% and 50% in the rural and urban areas, State-wise coverage will be determined by the Central Government.

- **Subsidized prices under TPDS and their revision**

Food grains under TPDS will be made available at subsidized prices of Rs. 3/2/1 per kg for rice, wheat, and coarse grains for a period of three years from the date of commencement of the Act. Thereafter prices will be suitably linked to Minimum Support Price (MSP).

- **Identification of Households**

Within the coverage under TPDS determined for each State, the work of identification of eligible households is to be done by the respective States/UTs.

- **Nutritional Support to Women and Children**

Pregnant women and lactating mothers and children in the age group of 6 months to 14 years will be entitled to meals, as prescribed in the nutritional norms under Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Schemes. Higher nutritional norms have been prescribed for malnourished children up to 6 years of age.

- **Maternity Benefit**

Pregnant women and lactating mothers will also be entitled to receive maternity benefit of not less than Rs. 6,000 per month.

- **Women Empowerment**

Eldest woman of the household, who is of 18 years of age and above, will be the head of the household for the purpose of issuing of ration cards.

- **Grievance Redressal Mechanism**

Grievance redressal mechanism at the District and State levels, where States will have the flexibility to use the existing machinery or set up separate mechanism.

- **Cost of Intra-State Transportation and Handling of Food Grains and Fair Price Shop Dealers' Margin**

Central Government will provide assistance to States in meeting the expenditure incurred by them on transportation of food grains within the State, its handling and FPS dealers' margin, as per norms to be devised for this purpose.

- **Transparency and Accountability**

Provisions have been made for disclosure of records relating to PDS, having social audits, and setting up of Vigilance Committees in order to ensure transparency and accountability.

- **Food Security Allowance**

Provision for food security allowance to entitled beneficiaries in case of non-supply of entitled food grains or meals.

- **Penalty**

Provision for penalty on public servant or authority to be imposed by the State Food Commission, in case of failure to comply with the relief to be provided.

India ranks 74 out of 113 major countries in terms of food security index. Though the available nutritional standard is 100% of the requirement, India lags far behind in terms of quality protein at 20%, which needs to be tackled, but no provision is made in the Act to subsidize the protein rich food products such as eggs, meat, fish, chicken, etc. India needs to concentrate on methods to improve the availability and affordability of protein rich food products using the latest technology without the need of additional land and water. Biogas or natural gas or methane produced from farm/agro/crop/domestic waste can also be used. In addition protein rich cattle/fish/poultry/pet animal feed can be done economically by cultivating *Methylococcus Capsulatus*¹ bacteria culture near to the rural / consumption areas with tiny land and water foot print.

4.4 PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

Food security refers to ensuring adequate food supply to people, especially those who are deprived of basic nutrition. Food security has been a major concern in

¹ *Methylococcus capsulatus* is an obligately methanotrophic gram-negative, non-motile coccoid bacterium. *M. capsulatus* are thermotolerant; their cells are encapsulated and tend to have a diplococcoid shape. In addition to methane, *M. capsulatus* is able to oxidize some organic hydrogen containing compounds such as methanol. It has been used commercially to produce animal feed from natural gas.

• "Natures Value Chain" (PDF). *Biomass Production. Nonfarm. Archived from the original (PDF) on 2019-08-02*. Retrieved 2016-12-12 by the retrievers.

• *Le Page, Michael (19 November 2016)*. "Food made from natural gas will soon feed farm animals – and us". *New Scientist*. Retrieved 11 December 2016.

India. According to UN-India, there are nearly 195 million undernourished people in India, which is a quarter of the world's hunger burden. Also, roughly 43% of children in India are chronically undernourished. India ranks 71 out of 113 major countries in terms of food security index 2021. Though the available nutritional standard is 100% of the requirement, India lags far behind in terms of quality protein intake at 20%, which needs to be tackled by making available protein-rich food products such as soybeans, lentils, meat, eggs, dairy, etc. at affordable prices. The Human Rights Measurement Initiative finds that India is doing 56.8% of what should be possible at its level of income for the right to food.

The Indian food security system was established by the Government of India under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution to distribute food and non-food items to India's poor at subsidized rates. Major commodities distributed include staple food grains, such as wheat, rice, sugar and essential fuels like kerosene, through a network of fair price shops (also known as ration shops) established in several states across the country. Food Corporation of India, a government-owned corporation, procures, and maintains the public distribution system (PDS).

For the purpose of PDS², as of July 30 2021 there were 5.38 lakh Fair Price Shops (FPS) operational in the country.

Under the PDS scheme, each family below the poverty line is eligible for 35 kg of rice or wheat every month, while a household above the poverty line is entitled to 15 kg of food grains on a monthly basis. A below poverty line card holder should be given 35 kg of food grain and the card holder above the poverty line should be given 15 kg of food grain, as per the norms of PDS.

Center State responsibilities

The central and state governments share the responsibility of regulating the PDS. While the central government is responsible for procurement, storage, transportation, and bulk allocation of food grains, state governments hold the responsibility for distributing the same to the consumers through the established network of fair price shops (FPSs). State governments are also responsible for operational responsibilities including allocation and identification of families below the poverty line, issue of ration cards, and supervision and monitoring the functioning of FPSs.

² This scheme was first started on 14 January 1945, during the Second World War, and was launched in the current form in June 1947. The introduction of rationing in India dates back to the 1940s Bengal famine. This rationing system was revived in the wake of acute food shortage during the early 1960s, before the Green Revolution. It involves two types, RPDS and TPDS. In 1992, PDS became RPDS (Revamped PDS) focusing the poor families, especially in the far-flung, hilly, remote, and inaccessible areas. In 1997 RPDS became TPDS (Targeted PDS), which established Fair Price Shops for the distribution of food grains at subsidized rates.

Fair price shop (FPS)

A public distribution shop, also known as fair price shop (FPS), is a part of India's public system established by the Government of India, which distributes rations at a subsidized price to the poor. Locally these are known, as ration shops and public distribution shops, and chiefly sell wheat, rice and sugar at a price lower than the market price called 'Issue Price'. Other essential commodities are also sold. To buy items one must have a ration card. These shops are operated throughout the country by joint assistance of central and state government. The items from these shops are much cheaper but are of average quality. Ration shops are now present in most localities, villages, towns, and cities. India has more than 5.38 lakh shops, constituting the largest distribution network in the world.

4.5 APPRAISAL

The public distribution system of India is not without its defects. With coverage of around 50 million below-poverty-line families, a review discovered the following structural shortcomings and disturbances:

- 1) In coverage and public expenditure, it is considered to be the most important food security network. However, the food grains supplied by the ration shops are not enough to meet the consumption needs of the poor. The average level of consumption of PDS in India is only 1 kg per person per month.
- 2) The PDS has been criticized for its urban bias and its failure to serve the poorer sections of the population effectively. The targeted PDS is costly and gives rise to much corruption in the process of extricating the poor from those who are less needy.
- 3) Growing instances of the consumers receiving inferior quality food grains in ration shops.
- 4) Rogue dealers swap good supplies received from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) with inferior stock and sell the good quality FCI stock to private shopkeepers.
- 5) Illicit fair price shop owners have been found to create large number of bogus cards to sell food grains in the open market.
- 6) Many FPS dealers resort to malpractice, illegal diversions of commodities, holding and black marketing due to the minimum salary received by them.
- 7) Numerous malpractices make safe and nutritious food inaccessible and unaffordable to many poor thus resulting in their food insecurity.
- 8) Identification of households to be of denoted status and distribution to granted PDS services has been highly irregular and diverse in various states. The recent development of Aadhar UIDAI cards has taken up the challenge of solving the problem of identification and distribution of PDS services along with Direct Cash Transfers.

- 9) Regional allocation and coverage of FPS are unsatisfactory and the core objective of price stabilization of essential commodities has not met.
- 10) There are no set criteria, as to which families are above or below the poverty line. This ambiguity gives massive scope for corruption and fallouts in PDS systems because some who are meant to benefit are not able to.
- 11) Several schemes have augmented the number of people aided by PDS, but the number is extremely low. Awareness about the presence of the PDS and FPS to poverty-stricken societies, namely the rural poor has been dismal.
- 12) The stock assigned to a single family cannot be bought in installments. This is a decisive barrier to the efficient functioning and overall success of PDS in India. Many families below the poverty line are not able to acquire ration cards either because they are seasonal migrant workers or because they live in unauthorized colonies. Many families also mortgage their ration cards for money.
- 13) Lack of clarity in the planning and structuring of social safety and security programs in India has resulted in the creation of numerous cards for the poor. Limited information about the overall use of cards has discouraged families below the poverty line from registering for new cards and has increased illegal creation of cards by such families to ensure maximum benefit for the family members.
- 14) Food availability is not that reliable in India. The challenge to produce more and more for the growing population is becoming increasingly hard for a country of its size and economic growth. Since the land in India is a shrinking resource for agriculture, the production rate for agriculture needs to be higher per unit of land and irrigation water. Over 60% of the Indian population depends on agriculture for their daily meals.

While there might be enough food for the whole population of India, many families and especially children in India don't have access to food because of financial problems. Hence, this is the cause of millions of malnourished children around India.

4.6 SUGGESTIONS

To improve the current system of the PDS, the following suggestions are furnished:

- 1) Vigilance squad should be strengthened to detect corruption.
- 2) Personnel-in-charge of the department should be chosen locally.
- 3) Margin of profit should be increased for honest business.
- 4) FCI and other prominent agencies should provide quality food grains for distribution.
- 5) Frequent checks and raids should be conducted to eliminate bogus and duplicate cards.

- 6) The Civil Supplies Corporation should open more fair price shops in rural areas.
- 7) The fair price dealers seldom display rate chart and quantity available in the black-boards in front of the shop. This should be enforced.
- 8) Some social activists have suggested that pulse is an importance source of protein so besides rice and wheat, pulses and lentils should also be included in PDS system.
- 9) The very poor should not be alienated owing to financial problems. Financial inclusiveness should be enforced with no room for them to be removed from receiving their entitlements.
- 10) The recent development of Aadhar UIDAI cards has taken up the challenge of solving the problem of identification and distribution of PDS services along with Direct Cash Transfers.

ACTIVITY

Visit a fair price shop/ration shop and let us know about its operation and working.

National Nutrition Mission

Recently, the NITI has released “Accelerating Progress on Nutrition in India: What Will It Take”, the third progress report on the National Nutrition Mission or the Poshan Abhiyaan. The initial Reports I and II focused majorly on the Mission’s preparedness and implementation by States and UTs, respectively.

Launched in 2018, it is the Government of India’s flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes for children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.

It is backed by a National Nutrition Strategy prepared by the NITI with the goal of attaining ‘Kuposhan Mukh Bharat’ or malnutrition-free India, by 2022.

This is because more than a third of children under-five suffer from stunting and wasting and 40% of children between one and four are anemic.

Also, over 50% of pregnant and non-pregnant women were found to be anemic, according to the National Family Health Survey-4 released in 2016.

About the Report

The third progress report (October 2019-April 2020) takes stock of the roll-out status on the ground and implementation challenges encountered at various levels through large scale datasets. These datasets are the NFHS-4 and Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (CNNS). The review report was drafted in March 2020 and does not factor deepening poverty and hunger levels since then, which are expected to have gone down further due to the Covid-19.

Aims

The Mission aims to:

- 1) Reduce stunting, under nutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3%, and 2% per annum respectively. For this it focuses to address the problem of malnutrition in a mission-mode.
- 2) For this, 50% of the total budget comes from the World Bank or other multilateral development banks and the rest of the 50% is through Centre's budgetary support.
- 3) The Centre's budgetary support is further divided into 60:40 between the Centre and the States, 90:10 for the north-eastern region and the Himalayan States, and 100% for the Union Territories (UTs) without legislature.

Concerns Highlighted

- On stunting, India's targets are conservative, as compared to the global target defined by the World Health Assembly (WHA), which is a prevalence rate of 5% of stunting, as opposed to India's goal of reducing stunting levels to 13.3% by 2022.
- The target of reducing prevalence levels of anemia among pregnant women from 50.3% in 2016 to 34.4% in 2022 and among adolescent girls from 52.9% in 2016 to 39.66% in 2022 is also considered to be conservative, as compared to the WHA's target of halving prevalence levels.
- In the wake of the pandemic, experts warn that deepening poverty and hunger may delay achieving the goals defined under the Mission.

Suggestions

On Stunting

- To improve complementary feeding using both behaviour change interventions and complimentary food supplements in the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).
- To work towards investments in girls and women (education during childhood, reducing early marriage and early pregnancy, improving care during and after pregnancy) along with other social determinants.
- To improve water, sanitation, hand washing with soap, and hygienic disposal of children's stools with other effective interventions.

On Wasting

- To include interventions that go beyond the treatment of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and also address moderate wasting, have the potential to achieve larger declines in wasting.
- To scale-up to reach facility-based treatment of SAM to all those needing in-patient care.

- To urgently release a full strategy for prevention and integrated management of wasting nationally.

On Anemia

- To scale-up scenario that focuses only on health sector interventions, which will achieve modest improvements in anemia among women of reproductive age.

Way Forward

- As the National Nutrition Mission continues to play an important role in India's endeavor against malnutrition, India needs to now accelerate actions on multiple fronts. The projections are optimistic, and will need to be re-adjusted for the Covid-19 disruptions to health and nutrition services.

There is a need to quickly graduate to a POSHAN-plus strategy, which apart from continued strengthening the four pillars of the mission (Technology, Convergence, Behavioral change, and Capacity building), also requires a renewed focus on other social determinants, in addition to addressing the governance challenges of the National Health Mission (NHM) and ICDS delivery mechanisms.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This Unit has dealt in detail about the food security in India.

Food availability is not that reliable in India. The food grains supplied by the ration shops are not enough to meet the consumption needs of the poor. The PDS has been criticized for its urban bias and the targeted PDS is costly and gives rise to much corruption in the process of extricating the poor from those who are less needy. There are growing instances of the consumers receiving inferior quality food grains in ration shops. Dealers swap good supplies received from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) with inferior stock and sell the good quality FCI stock to private shopkeepers. Illicit fair price shop owners have been found to create large number of bogus cards to sell food grains in the open market. All this make safe and nutritious food inaccessible and un-affordable to many poor thus resulting in their food insecurity. Identification of households to be of denoted status and distribution to be granted via PDS services has been highly irregular and diverse in various states. Awareness about the presence of the PDS and FPS to poverty-stricken societies, namely the rural poor has been dismal. The stock assigned to a single family cannot be bought in installments. Lack of clarity in the planning and structuring of social safety and security programs in India has resulted in the creation of numerous cards for the poor. The challenge to produce more and more for the growing population is becoming increasingly hard for a country of its size and economic growth. While there might be enough food for the whole population of India, many families and especially children in India don't have access to food because of financial problems. Hence, this is the cause of millions of malnourished children around India.

The Unit has given some suggestive measures that can overcome the limitations. For instance, vigilance squad can be strengthened to detect corruption; personnel-in-charge of the department should be chosen locally; margin of profit should be increased for honest business; FCI and other prominent agencies should provide quality food grains for distribution; frequent checks and raids should be conducted to eliminate bogus and duplicate cards; the Civil Supplies Corporation should open more fair price shops in rural areas; and the fair price dealers seldom display rate chart and quantity available in the black-boards in front of the shop. This should be enforced. Some social activists have suggested that pulse is an importance source of protein so besides rice and wheat, pulses and lentils should also be included in PDS system. The recent development of Aadhar UIDAI cards has taken up the challenge of solving the problem of identification and distribution of PDS services along with Direct Cash Transfers.

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UNIT 5 FOOD SECURITY

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Targets of SDG 4
- 5.3 National Education Policy (2020)
- 5.4 India's Educational Initiatives: Select Examples
- 5.5 Conclusion
- 5.6 References

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- spell out the targets of SDG 4;
- establish link between India's education policy and SDG 4; and
- describe Indian context of education policy aiming to fulfil SDG 4 using select examples.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

When schools closed for the outbreak of the corona virus and went for online learning, teachers were not only worried about how they would make students learn without physical classrooms. They were apprehensive over the fact that majority of the learners did not have access to basic technology. The teaching community and policy makers perceived that the pandemic has not only widened but deepened the gap between the poor and rich (increased inequalities). As per a research study, a school teacher from Bihar reported that only 40 to 50 percent of the students have access to internet and laptops and the rest do not have access to digital devices/internet (UNESCO, 2021). In fact, the study found out that access to digital devices and reliable infrastructure continues to be the greatest challenge for students especially from poor families. Apart from digital divide, children of migrated parents, child labour, preference to support the education of boy siblings of the girl child etc. can be cited as reasons for disrupting learning.

In the past, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on Education had indicated that every child irrespective of gender would receive primary education by 2015. The MDG agenda also called for action to expand and improve early childhood care and education, increase of attendance percentage, and free and good quality of education for the children. For the young and old adults, the thrust areas included lifelong learning, adult literacy, gender equality, and provision for learning opportunities. To illustrate, MDG on Education was able to witness a slight increase in literacy from 87 percent in 2000 to 89 percent in 2012 among

15 to 24 year old learners. At a global level in 2018, as per the UN, nearly, 258 million children and youth were still out of school.

The new education goal propagated by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) made an attempt to reach out more comprehensively than the MDGs with an assertion that “all girls and boys should get complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education” (UN Statistics Division). However, with the temporary closure of schools owing to pandemic and children relying on caregivers at home, it has been stated that nearly 91 percent of poor children and youth were out of school, thus, halting years of progress. The United Nations Sustainable Development Report 2021 reports that the pandemic has wiped out twenty years of education gains. In this regard, United Nations intends to intensify its work with governments across the globe to prioritise education both as a policy and practice, so as to provide free access to school education to all-including the vulnerable and marginalised groups.

In this Unit, we shall discuss the goals and opportunities that are set by the SDG 4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, in the context of Indian education policy and initiatives.

5.2 TARGETS OF SDG 4

At the global level, SDG 4 has ten associated ‘targets’ that can be applied in the context of any country. According to UN, the last three targets depend on the ‘means of implementation.’

- 4.1 Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
- 4.2 Ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.
- 4.3 Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education.
- 4.4 Let the youths and adults possessing relevant skills, technical, and vocational skills grow in number for employment, jobs, and entrepreneurship.
- 4.5 Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations.
- 4.6 Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.
- 4.7 Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for

sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, appreciation of cultural diversity, and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

4.a By 2030, Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability, and gender sensitive and also provide safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all.

4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States, and African countries, for enrolment in higher education; including vocational training, and information and communications technology, technical, engineering, and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.

4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and Small Island developing States.

5.3 NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to reflect the SDG 4 goals on education. For achieving the SDG targets, the Policy emphasises to reconfigure the entire education system. In anticipation to the growing demand for a skilled workforce, the NEP targets for a multidisciplinary orientation across sciences, social sciences, and humanities. For instance, the overwhelming impact of climate change, depletion of natural resources, natural and human made disasters, pandemic/epidemic etc. on economically and socially deprived sections of the society poses the need for multidisciplinary learning. The Policy points out that more than ever children must be provided ample scope to shift from less content to more learning. In other words, NEP seeks to develop certain skills in a learner like critical thinking, problem solving, creative thinking, innovation etc. so as to become employment ready. Indeed, the NEP envisions for “equitable access to the highest-quality education for all learners regardless of social or economic background” so that none of the learners are excluded (National Education Policy, 2020). When we make education as inclusive as possible, it enables us to achieve an inclusive society where the members of the society would be able to self-organise and address the increasing development challenges of the nation. To achieve this, NEP seeks to establish multidisciplinary institutions. For instance, NEP aims to groove professionals in the emerging areas like Artificial Intelligence, big data analysis, nanotechnology, neuroscience etc. In fact, at the Under Graduate level, NEP seeks to apply the above mentioned emerging areas in the fields of health, environment, and sustainable living so that it enhances the employability of the learners.

The NEP seeks to achieve the unachieved targets of previous policies like equity and access to quality education. One of the milestones of elementary education in India is the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 through which every child between the age 6 to 14 are to be enrolled in school. Through this Act, education has been made as a child's fundamental right and denying this right would be an offence. While establishing the thrust areas to include the marginalised, disadvantaged, and underrepresented groups, the NEP strives to apply education as the pathway to achieve equality, economic and social mobility. To strengthen this pathway, NEP looks upon to the teachers, as the core of the education reforms who would build the next generation of citizens. In fact, NEP is set to recruit the "best and brightest" people to enter the teaching profession at all levels. From this policy target of NEP, we can understand that India is on the road to achieve SDG4.c.

The prime goal of the schooling system is to ensure that children, especially, from low-income families attend and complete school education. For perspective, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for Grades 6 to 8 was 91 percent, whereas for Grades 9 to 10 and 11 to 12 stands at 79.3 and 56.5 percent. The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) states that in India nearly 3.22 crore children were out of school in the age group 6 to 17 years. This means the children, who were school drop outs, are to be brought back to school and make education free and accessible for all including the drop out children. Schemes like Samagra Shiksha have been envisaged to provide such educational opportunities for the underprivileged children. To keep track of those student drop outs to re-enter schools, the NEP suggests the idea of connecting schools with Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, state and district level functionaries and alike. At the ground level, NEP suggests counsellors, well trained, and qualified social workers from civil society organisations to connect with teachers, parents, and communities so as to motivate the drop out children to consistently attend school so as to improve their learning capacities.

Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

For reaching out to the Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) and those who are unable to attend a physical school, Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Programmes can be the effective pathway. In fact, NEP suggests strengthening and expanding school ODL programmes that are offered by National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) and State Open Schools.

Vocational Education

The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) stated that in India less than five percentage of young workforce (age group 19-24) have received formal vocational education. However, the percentage of young workforce who received vocational education in developed countries has been phenomenal *vis-à-vis* South Korea (96 percent), Germany (75 percent), and United States of America (52 percent). The above data reveals that there is a desperate need to accelerate

progress of vocational education in India. In line with SDG 4.4, NEP seeks to expose at least 50 percent of learners in school and higher education systems to vocational education by 2025.

Adult Education

With the aim to improve the adult education and literacy, a curriculum framework for adult education has been suggested by NEP with five inclusive programmes, such as:

- a) foundational literacy and numeracy
- b) critical life skills like financial literacy, digital literacy, healthcare and awareness, child care and education, family welfare
- c) vocational skills
- d) basic education
- e) continuing education (holistic adult education courses in arts, sciences, culture, sports, recreation etc.)

The above mentioned discussion is in line with SDG 4.6: “ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy”.

Having briefly discussed about NEP, the ensuing section makes an attempt to look into some of the initiatives of India through select examples.

5.4 INDIA’S EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES: SELECT EXAMPLES

Samagra Shiksha

With the aim to holistically handle school education from pre-nursery to Grade twelve, the Union Budget 2018-19 came up with the initiative called Samagra Shiksha in 2018. The purpose of this scheme is to improve the effectiveness of school in terms of providing equal opportunities without any discrimination and equitable learning outcomes. Equitable learning outcomes refers to that each student irrespective of gender, place of birth, caste, religion, community, disability etc. are ensured opportunity to achieve their fullest potential. For example, one of its thrust areas is to deliver education through digital technologies like smart classrooms, digital boards, Direct-to-home channels etc. Notably, Samagra Shiksha has subsumed previous schemes, such as, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Teacher Education (TE).

The scheme seeks to synchronise the implementation strategies and resources at the systems level *vis-à-vis* state, district, and sub-district levels. Indeed, the mandate is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality school education in line with SDG 4.1 and 4.5. The major objectives of the Scheme are to bridge social and gender gaps in school education, promote vocationalisation of education, play

based learning, smart classrooms, and support states in implementation of Right to Education Act, 2009. In order to reduce gender gaps, the scheme focuses on up gradation of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyayas from Class 6-8 and Class 6-12. In addition, it seeks to strengthen and upgrade the nodal agencies of teacher training like State Institutes of Education and District Institute of Education and Training (DIET). Above all, it has also made its commitment to comply with 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' Scheme.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme was launched in 2015 to address the issues related to empowerment of girl child and women. Besides survival and protection of the girl child, one of the prominent objectives of the Scheme is to ensure her education and participation. For example, nation-wide campaigns have been organised at district level to re-enrol drop out girls at secondary level. For perspective, one of its intended targets is to train elected representatives/grassroots functionaries in mobilising communities for girls' education. Indeed, the role of Department of School Education and Literacy is to activate School Management Committees (SMCs) so as to ensure universal enrolment, retention, and completion of secondary education for girls. BBBP also mobilises campaign for re-enrolment of girl drop outs in secondary schools and for girl child friendly schools. The Department is also involved in construction of girls' hostels for secondary and senior secondary schools. For achieving the intended outcomes, BBBP seeks to engage with various stakeholders, such as, district administration, schools, colleges, higher educational institutions, local Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Community-based Organisations (CBOs), and other civil society groups to organise sensitisation campaigns regarding the value of a girl child and enabling her to get educated.

Open School

National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) was started in India in 1979 with a mission to offer continuing education from school stage to pre-degree stage. Specifically, it provides distance learners access to Open Basic Education (OBE), secondary education course, senior secondary education course, vocational education courses, and life enrichment programmes. With the objective to cater to the vocational needs of learners including differently-abled, NIOS offers nearly 103 skill based courses to the students of Grade X to XII, such as, cookery, Information Technology (IT), horticulture, agriculture, carpentry, home science, engineering, paramedical, yoga and wellness, tailoring etc.

Example 1: Ms. Sudha was a housewife till her spouse passed away. Eventually, she was given the job of a police constable. As she had to raise her two children, Sudha accepted this offer. Although, a secondary school dropout, Sudha's children insisted her to join NIOS. She went on to complete her secondary education and the qualification enabled her to feel confident and empowered

From the above example we can infer that India is on the path to “eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education...” (SDG 4.5).

Example 2: Mr. Charles, a school drop out at the senior secondary level completed his senior secondary course at NIOS in humanities. After completion, he could enrol for Under Graduate programme and simultaneously pursued a certificate course in Electronics. Equipped with both academic and vocational skills, Charles was offered employment with a private organisation. He strongly asserts that the flexibility offered by NIOS had enabled his career development (NIOS success stories).

From the above examples, we can infer that the Ministry of Education through NIOS intends to fulfil SDG 4.3: “substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship” and SDG 4.4: ‘...equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education....’

Pre-Matric Scholarship

Pre-Matric scholarship for minority students was launched in 2006 to encourage parents from minority communities to send their children to schools and enable them to support their children to complete school education. Indeed the objective of the scheme is to ‘empower through education’. Scholarships are awarded to minority students who have secured not less than 50 percent in their final exam and whose parents’ annual income does not exceed Rs. 1 lakh. For perspective, during the year 2017-20, nearly, 3000004 pre-matric scholarships have been distributed across India (Minority Affairs Website).

Job Readiness through Coaching Classes

With the purpose to prepare economically backward students for competitive exams, especially, from Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), ‘Free Coaching Scheme for SC and OBC Students’ was launched in 2016. Its objective is to enable them to secure an appropriate job either in public or private sector. To illustrate, coaching classes are being held for Group A and B examinations, Staff Selection Commission (SSC), bank examinations, engineering and medical entrance examinations, etc.

Persons with Disabilities (PwD)

According to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, it is stated that government and local authorities need to ensure that every child with benchmark disability is able to access free education up to eighteen years in an appropriate environment. The Rights of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, provisions that children with benchmark disability between the age group six to eighteen years can opt for their schools *vis-à-vis* neighbourhood school or a special school. Besides providing scholarships for school students with

disabilities, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities also provides scholarships for the higher education learners. For example, the scholarship 'Top Class Education' benefits the aspiring diploma/graduate/post graduate students in the institutes of excellence, as notified by the concerned authorities. The Scholarship for Top Class Education was started in 2015-16. In addition, 50 percent of the total scholarships (in pre-matric, and top class education category) have been reserved for women students with disabilities. In case the number of girl/women students do not adequately avail the scholarships, the unutilised scholarships can be reallocated for eligible male students with disabilities.

Example 1:

Under the Scholarship for Top Class Education, the Department reimburses the tuition fees of up to Rs. 2 lakh per annum. Based on the type of disabilities, special allowances of Rs. 2000 per month can be availed by the learners. Also, the learner with disability can be reimbursed (up to Rs. 30000) for purchasing his/her aids and assistive devices. For instance, for visually challenged learners, assistive devices include Braille typewriter, laptop and screen reading software, talk software for mobile phone accessibility, etc.

Example 2:

To prepare the PwD for competitive examinations either for recruitment or entrance examinations, the Department offers 'Free Coaching for Persons with Disabilities'. For example, recruitment examinations conducted by Union Public Service Commission's Group A/B examinations, Staff Selection Commission (SSC), bank examinations or entrance examinations for securing admissions to higher education courses like engineering and medical entrance examinations, law, management, etc. Further, Free Coaching has been implemented through reputed coaching institutions that are run by state/central governments, higher educational institutions, registered private institutions etc. Under the scheme, fee component would be directly released to the coaching institute where the student with disability has been coached.

From the above discussion it can be inferred that the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities through various entities intends to achieve SDG 4.5: '...ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities...'

ACTIVITY

Read some of the newspaper/magazine articles about the issues and concerns that are faced by students with disabilities. After reading the articles, discuss their plight with your family and friends.

5.5 CONCLUSION

According to United Nations, “Education helps reduce inequalities and reach gender equality and is crucial to fostering tolerance and more peaceful societies.” The significance of education can be best understood through the words of our former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi: “Education is a liberating force, and in our age it is also a democratising force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances”. From the above, it can be inferred that if a child is educated, it means s/he would become an empowered adult to decide about their employment, family, and other choices of life etc. In the absence of such empowerment opportunities it would inhibit socioeconomic mobility and it would be difficult to reduce inequalities. In line with SDG 4, the Indian government has committed itself in ensuring equitable access to education for all, including the socially and economically deprived sections of the population.

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UNIT 6 HEALTH

Structure

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- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Right to Health and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- 6.3 Targets of SDG3
- 6.4 Indian Context: National Health Policy, 2017
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6.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- establish link between SDGs and health rights;
- spell out the targets of SDG 3; and
- describe Indian context with reference to SDG 3.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

To lead a healthy life means to make lifestyle choices that complements the physical and mental well-being of an individual. In fact, managing one's physical health itself is challenging especially when one is infected with corona virus disease. While physical health involves coping up with more care and caution, mental health strives to adapt to the new normal/realities, such as, work from home, online classes, temporary unemployment, social distancing etc. The World Health Organisation (WHO) in its global campaign to promote mental health amidst the pandemic has indicated that besides the new realities people have the fear of contracting the virus and remain anxious about their kith and kin who are particularly vulnerable to the virus. As physical and mental health are being

affected by the pandemic, it becomes imperative for the social policy makers and community members to stay strongly committed in co-creating a people-centred, affordable, and quality health services through United Nations Sustainable Development Goal – 3: Good Health and Well-being.

Despite noteworthy milestones been made through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): Health, progress has not been uniform across regions and countries. For example, MDG 5 intended to improve maternal health and was successful in reducing the rate of decline in the number of maternal deaths from 523,000 in 1990 to 289,000 in 2013. In fact, globally the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) had declined by 45 percent with most of the cases dropping since 2000. However, significant gaps had occurred due to poverty, gender, disability, geographical location, and ethnicity. Especially, inaccessibility and unaffordability to quality healthcare continues to haunt the poor and vulnerable population. While MDGs completed its deadline in 2015, the success and thrust that it has put forth has built a platform for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Indeed, SDGs embraces with more opportunities and aspirations for a sustainable and dignified life. And for achieving this agenda there are a host of challenges lying ahead especially in developing countries. The challenges include communicable and non-communicable diseases, skilled human resources, and leveraging financial investments in affordable healthcare.

In this Unit, we shall discuss the goals and opportunities that are set by the SDG-3-‘Good Health and Well-being’ in the context of Indian health policy.

6.2 RIGHT TO HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

With right to health being a fundamental human right and a key parameter for measuring sustainable development, the broad goal of SDG 3 is to: ‘Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages’. One of the strong commitments of SDG 3 is to put an end to Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), tuberculosis, malaria, and other such diseases. This goal was set in the global context that poor and inadequate healthcare threatens the rights of women, children, and men especially from poverty-ridden regions. In other words, one’s health is affected because of poverty and in turn affects other facets of sustainable development, such as, water and sanitation, gender equality, climate change, and peace and stability. For “almost all the other 16 SDGs are related to health and their achievement will contribute to health indirectly.” (World Health Organisation Website).

Although MDGs were able to make notable development in terms of halving the child mortality rate, maternal mortality rate, fighting against tuberculosis and malaria etc. more progress need to be done on all fronts (Sarvaes, 2017). In fact, significant challenges continue to haunt the forthcoming years’ *vis-à-vis* malnourishment among millions of children and adults, inaccessibility to quality medicines, lack of access to women on sexual and reproductive healthcare, the number of AIDS cases that occur each day etc. In addition, new health challenges

and risks posed by COVID 19 like long term effects on brain, heart, lungs etc., threatens livelihoods in both the developed and developing countries. In this regard, one of the pertinent questions that arise is: What will SDG on health is likely to do for the deprived sections by 2030?

The SDG 3 is linked to human rights of the deprived sections. And achieving SDG 3 depends on its linkages with other SDG targets. Let us view the interrelationship between SDG 3 and other SDGs in Table 1.

Table 6.1: SDGs and Related Health Rights

SDGs	Related health rights
SDG 1 No Poverty	Right to Standard of Living Right to Social Security
SDG 2 Zero Hunger	Right to Adequate Food
SDG 3 Good health and well-being	Right to Life Particularly of Women and Children Right to Health Particularly of Women And Children Right to Enjoy the Benefits of Scientific Progress and it's Application
SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation	Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation Right to Health Equal Access to Water and Sanitation for Rural Women
SDG 12 Responsible consumption and production	Right to Health including the Right to Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment Right to Adequate Food and the Right to Safe Drinking Water
SDG 13 Climate Action	Right to Health including the Right to Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment Right to Adequate Food and the Right to Safe Drinking Water
SDG 14 Life below Water	Right to Health including the Right to Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment Right to Adequate Food and the Right to Safe Drinking Water
SDG 15 Life on Land	Right to Health including the Right to Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment Right to Adequate Food and the Right to Safe Drinking Water

Source: Office of the High Commission, United Nations Human Rights

Having understood that right to health is indeed a fundamental right; in the ensuing section let us try to understand the various health targets of SDG 3.

6.3 TARGETS OF SDG 3

The global goal for health intends to ensure preventive measures promote healthy lifestyles, and quality healthcare for all irrespective of gender, ethnicity, religion, income levels etc. The 13 SDG health targets are as follows (Global goals Website):

Target 3.1: By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.

Target 3.2: By 2030, end preventable deaths of new-borns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births.

Target 3.3: By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.

Target 3.4: By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

Target 3.5: Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

Target 3.6: By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.

Target 3.7: By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.

Target 3.8: Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

Target 3.9: By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.

Target 3.A: Strengthen the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate.

Target 3.B: Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines.

Target 3.C: To increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small-island developing States.

Target 3.D: Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks.

Having understood the SDG targets *vis-à-vis* Good Health and Well-being, in the following section, an attempt has been made to understand Indian context.

6.4 INDIAN CONTEXT: NATIONAL HEALTH POLICY 2017

India's National Health Policy in 1983 and 2002 had provided considerable impetus to the health plans, programmes, and policies. In fact, the steps evolved in the post-independence and by subsequent governments since 1947 has reduced MMR and Infant Mortality rate. Nevertheless, the rates of non-communicable and infectious diseases are growing higher posing a high stress on the existing health infrastructure and workforce. Building on the previous policies 1983 and 2002, currently, we have the National Health Policy (NHP) of 2017 that have been aligned on the lines of SDGs. The Policy envisions achieving health and well-being for all at all ages through preventive health care and universal access to quality healthcare.

6.4.1 Key Policy Principles

The Policy principles are in line with the principles of Social Policy, as discussed in Unit 1. Let us discuss this in the ensuing paragraphs:

1) Professionalism, Integrity and Ethics

NHP has pledged to maintain high professional standards, integrity and ethics while delivering healthcare services across the country.

2) Equity

This refers to reaching out to the underserved and marginalised communities. The NHP assures for “greater investments and financial protection for the poor” who are highly affected by ill-health (NHP Website).

3) Affordability

Due to high cost of services, affordability has taken a setback, hence, NHP fosters to make affordability a priority.

4) Universality

The Policy strongly condemns exclusion to health services on social, economic, and health grounds and therefore aims to cater to all population including the underserved communities.

5) Patient-centric and Quality of Care

The Policy aims to promote gender sensitivity in all healthcare services by treating the patients with dignity and confidentiality. It also strives to evolve standards and operational guidelines to boost up the quality of healthcare at all levels.

6) Accountability

NHP intends to promote financial and performance accountability and abolish corrupt practices in both public and private sectors.

7) **Inclusive Partnerships**

It advocates for a multi-stakeholder approach and participation of non-health ministries and entities. At the local level, NHP seeks to collaborate with higher education institutions, private sector, and not for profit organisations.

8) **Decentralisation**

It seeks to strengthen institutional capacity at the grassroots level through decentralised decision making, involvement of local communities in health planning process.

9) **Dynamism and Adaptability**

The Policy seeks to remain dynamic and adaptive based on evidence based learning from local communities to national and international knowledge partners.

Now, let us look into some of the objectives of NHP 2017 in the ensuing subsection:

6.4.2 Select Policy Objectives

- 1) To make free access to health and comprehensive primary health care services in terms of reproductive, maternal, child, and adolescent health care (Universal Health Coverage). To illustrate, by 2025, it is intended to “increase utilization of public health facilities by 50 percent from current levels”.
- 2) The Policy entails for optimal use of existing health workforce and infrastructure. In the process it intends to collaborate with Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) on pro-bono (without asking for payment) basis. Every family (from the underserved community) would avail a health card and have access to doctors of their choice, who volunteers for community health services.
- 3) By 2025, the Government intends to increase health expenditure (as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product) from 1.15 percent to 2.5 percent.
- 4) By 2025, it has been planned to increase the number of community health volunteers in high priority districts.
- 5) To strengthen citizen trust on public health system by making it reliable, efficient, patient-centric, affordable, and effective.

6.5 INDIA’S HEALTH INITIATIVES: SELECT EXAMPLES

Let us look into India’s health initiatives *vis-à-vis* MMR, immunisation coverage for children, Tuberculosis (TB) Free India, Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan, and prevention of malaria in the ensuing paragraphs.

6.5.1 Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)

Maternal Mortality refers to deaths due to complications at the time of child birth. By 2030 the global target aims to decrease MMR to 70 per 100,000 live births, but, India's average stands at 103 per 100,000 live births during 2017-19 (Sen Gupta, 2022). Indeed the MMR has improved from 113 in 2016-18 to 103 in 2017-19. However, according to the Registrar General of India, few Indian states have very high MMR with 130 or more maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. The Indian states include Assam (205), Uttar Pradesh (167), Madhya Pradesh (163), Chhattisgarh (160), Rajasthan (141), Odisha (136) and Bihar (130). On the other, MMR is low in states like Kerala (30), Maharashtra (38), Telangana (56), Tamil Nadu (58), and Andhra Pradesh (58).

Example: Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)

Under the National Health Mission (NHM), JSY intends to ensure safe motherhood and reduce MMR and neonatal (new-born) mortality. Having launched in 2005 across India, it provides provisions for institutional delivery among poor pregnant women especially in the low performing states. Besides, it provides cash assistance to the poor women. For example, a rural mother who belong to one of the low performing states (such as Assam, Uttar Pradesh etc.) receive cash assistance of Rs. 1400 (NHM Website).

6.5.2 Immunisation coverage for children

Immunisation refers to the child survival and safe motherhood wherein nationally it intends to combat against nine diseases like nationally against 9 diseases - Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Measles, Rubella, severe form of Childhood Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B and Meningitis and Pneumonia. The Routine Immunization Programme Dashboard revealed that during 2019-2020 nearly 91 percent of Indian children between the age group of 9-11 months were completely immunised. According to National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, states like Maharashtra, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh have achieved the 100 percent target and high immunisation coverage while Nagaland and Puducherry have the lowest immunization coverage with 54 percent. For example, India's Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) is one of the largest public health interventions that annually targets 2.67 crore new born and 2.9 crore pregnant women.

Example: Mission Indradhanush

The Government of India launched this Mission in 2014 with the aim to vaccinate children up to two years of age and also pregnant women. In the process, the Government was able to identify 201 high focus districts that have the highest percentage of partially immunised and unimmunised children. Under the Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0, the Government aims to cover the underserved and tribal populations who are spread across 272 districts. This Mission in sync with SDG target that aims to end preventable child deaths by 2030. In this regard, various ministries coordinate with each other to achieve this SDG target, like Ministry of Women and Child Development, Department of Panchayati Raj Institutions, Ministry of Urban Development, Ministry of Youth Affairs.

6.5.3 Tuberculosis (TB) Free India

In 2016, the Government of India launched the TB Free India campaign so as to free the country of TB by 2025. Indeed, the country target is five years ahead of SDG 3. This initiative has been launched, as India has the highest percentage of TB patients at the global level. According to the Tribal TB Initiative, TB is not a medical disease but a social problem, as the worst affected are the underserved communities, who are already battling against poverty, malnutrition, poor hygiene, stigma, loss of livelihood, poor standard of living, inadequate healthcare etc. Since this involves a multitude of issues, the epidemic can be comprehensively contained only when the Government partners with non-State actors. Establishing partnerships for achieving the health goals comes under SDG 17.

By partnering with sub-national, national, and international actors, the purpose of the initiative is to put an end to TB especially in TB hotspots of tribal areas. To illustrate, with the aim to improve TB care and support services among the tribal populace, Tribal TB Initiative has been instituted, as four year collaboration until 2025. This partnership comprises of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and United States Agency for International Development (USAID, as technical partner). This is first of its kind initiative that attempts to leverage the potentials of governance, health workforce, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for removing TB.

6.5.4 Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA)

Various studies reveal that substance abuse significantly increases the risk of suicides and mental health issues like anxiety and depression. In this context, Government of India has initiated the Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA) to combat against substance abuse and increase awareness about healthy lifestyles and helpful habits. Having a sound mind in a sound body is essential for a healthy society that eventually contribute to nation-building activities. According to the Joint Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the initiative aims to include higher education institutions, youth clubs, and women groups in generating awareness about the issues of substance abuse to adolescents and those population at risk. In line with this initiative, 272 districts that are highly vulnerable to substance abuse have been identified to make them free from narcotics and other harmful substances. NMBA has a toll free de-addiction helpline 14446 to cater to those who are in distress. NMBA also has its twitter handle to spread messages related to myths and facts of addiction. For example, one of the myths (false belief) about drug abuse is 'drugs sharpen one's thinking and lead to greater concentration'. However, the fact is 'drugs induce dullness and adversely affect normal functioning of the body and mind.' (NMBA twitter page).

In fact, one of the SDG health targets is to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse and alcohol consumption and Government of India has launched its flagship campaign NMBA in 2020. Let us understand this further through a case example.

Case Example:

Kim belongs to a poor family in Manipur. Due to uninvolved parenting, Kim became a school drop-out at a very early age. As a child he started taking asylum from strangers which subsequently ended up in unhelpful habits like substance abuse. Over a period he got himself socially isolated from family and friends. However, he came across an outreach worker, who encouraged him to avail the services at the Out Reach and Drop in Centre (ODIC). ODIC is run by the United Voluntary Youth Council, Churachandpur, (Manipur) that provides personalised intervention for de-addiction. Although, Kim was initially apprehensive about the withdrawal symptoms, as days passed on he could gain self-confidence through counselling process. For example, the Centre enabled him to re-establish connection with his family members. Kim having reconciled with his family is able to recover from substance use disorder and hopes to lead a happy and healthy life (NMBA Newsletter).

Due to the partnerships between NMBA and local voluntary agencies, the Government of India has been able to strengthen the treatment of substance abuse, as targeted by SDG 3.5

6.5.5 Prevention of Malaria

According to the World Malaria Report, 2020, India has made significant progress in containing the disease. The Report reveals that India is the only high endemic country to have reported a decline from 27.6 percent in 2018 to 17.6 percent in 2018. Further, there have been largest drop in cases region-wide from 20 million to 6 million. As per WHO, between 2001 and 2016, the number of people falling sick from malaria was low. With malaria remaining a public health issue, the Government has launched the National Framework for Malaria Elimination (NFME) in 2016. It has established targets up to year 2030 to contain the disease in a phased manner.

Majority of the states that report malaria include Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tripura and Meghalaya. Since most of these states are located on a hilly, tribal, and forest terrain, it has become hotspots of high malaria transmission. Based on WHO's Global Technical Strategy for Malaria, the Indian health authorities have mobilised to provide free access to bed nets/mosquito nets, expand rapid diagnostic tests, and early treatment for people affected with the disease. To illustrate, nearly 900,000 trained Accredited Social Health Activists – or ASHAs are spread across the tribal areas to educate the community about preventive measures (WHO, 2018). In 2017, with the financial aid from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, ASHAs have distributed around 11 million bed nets in the high risk areas of Odisha. These tribal people neither have access nor able to afford for bed nets and when ASHAs come across such tribal populace, they educate them about the basics of malaria control. For the illiterate population, ASHAs read aloud the health alerts in their local languages and eventually engage in dialogue with the community to ensure that they have understood the health message. Besides, ASHAs also encourage the onlookers to spread the message to their family and friends.

From the above discussion, you must have understood that India has made an assertive stand regarding SDG 3.3 that states: “By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.”

Now, we will discuss the National Nutrition Mission.

6.6 NATIONAL NUTRITION MISSION

Recently, the NITI has released “Accelerating Progress on Nutrition in India: What Will It Take”, the third progress report on the National Nutrition Mission or the Poshan Abhiyaan. The initial Reports I and II focused majorly on the Mission’s preparedness and implementation by States and UTs, respectively. Launched in 2018, it is the Government of India’s flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes for children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.

It is backed by a National Nutrition Strategy prepared by the NITI with the goal of attaining ‘Kuposhan Mukh Bharat’ or malnutrition-free India, by 2022.

This is because more than a third of children under-five suffer from stunting and wasting and 40% of children between one and four are anaemic.

Also, over 50% of pregnant and non-pregnant women were found to be anaemic, according to the National Family Health Survey-4 released in 2016.

About the Report

The third progress report (October 2019-April 2020) takes stock of the roll-out status on the ground and implementation challenges encountered at various levels through large scale datasets. These datasets are the NFHS-4 and Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (CNNS). The review report was drafted in March 2020 and does not factor deepening poverty and hunger levels since then, which are expected to have gone down further due to the Covid-19.

Aims

The Mission aims to:

- 1) Reduce stunting, under nutrition, anaemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3%, and 2% per annum respectively. For this it focuses to address the problem of malnutrition in a mission-mode.
- 2) For this, 50% of the total budget comes from the World Bank or other multilateral development banks and the rest of the 50% is through Centre’s budgetary support.
- 3) The Centre’s budgetary support is further divided into 60:40 between the Centre and the States, 90:10 for the north-eastern region and the Himalayan States, and 100% for the Union Territories (UTs) without legislature.

Concerns Highlighted

- 1) On stunting, India's targets are conservative, as compared to the global target defined by the World Health Assembly (WHA), which is a prevalence rate of 5% of stunting, as opposed to India's goal of reducing stunting levels to 13.3% by 2022.
- 2) The target of reducing prevalence levels of anaemia among pregnant women from 50.3% in 2016 to 34.4% in 2022 and among adolescent girls from 52.9% in 2016 to 39.66% in 2022 is also considered to be conservative, as compared to the WHA's target of halving prevalence levels.
- 3) In the wake of the pandemic, experts warn that deepening poverty and hunger may delay achieving the goals defined under the Mission.

Suggestions

On Stunting

- To improve complementary feeding using both behaviour change interventions and complimentary food supplements in the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).
- To work towards investments in girls and women (education during childhood, reducing early marriage and early pregnancy, improving care during and after pregnancy) along with other social determinants.
- To improve water, sanitation, hand washing with soap, and hygienic disposal of children's stools with other effective interventions.

On Wasting

- To include interventions that go beyond the treatment of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and also address moderate wasting, have the potential to achieve larger declines in wasting.
- To scale-up to reach facility-based treatment of SAM to all those needing in-patient care.
- To urgently release a full strategy for prevention and integrated management of wasting nationally.

On Anaemia

- To scale-up scenario that focuses only on health sector interventions, which will achieve modest improvements in anaemia among women of reproductive age.

Way Forward

- As the National Nutrition Mission continues to play an important role in India's endeavour against malnutrition, India needs to now accelerate actions on multiple fronts. The projections are optimistic, and will need to be re-adjusted for the Covid-19 disruptions to health and nutrition services.

- There is a need to quickly graduate to a POSHAN-plus strategy, which apart from continued strengthening the four pillars of the mission (Technology, Convergence, Behavioural change, and Capacity building), also requires a renewed focus on other social determinants, in addition to addressing the governance challenges of the National Health Mission (NHM) and ICDS delivery mechanisms.

ACTIVITY

- 1) View/read news articles about any one of the following health issues: Malaria/Tuberculosis/Drug addiction/any other infectious disease.
- 2) Let us know about the implementation of National Nutrition Mission in your State.

6.7 CONCLUSION

With health being a priority, both State and non-State actors (like NGOs, voluntary agencies) have come together in providing accessible, affordable and quality healthcare. MDGs had significantly contributed in strengthening the treatment and preventive healthcare across the globe. However, it could not meet the health targets comprehensively due to country-specific challenges in terms of infrastructure, health workforce etc. In this regard, SDGs have set its global goals in terms of health, thus, making every government design policies for its population. According to WHO (2017), to achieve the overall health goal we need to establish Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and access to quality health care with a mission that none are excluded. The road map has been devised and the onus now is on governments to strengthen the ties with various stakeholders.

When we talk about the National Nutrition Mission, there is a need to quickly graduate to a POSHAN-plus strategy, which apart from continued strengthening the four pillars of the mission (Technology, Convergence, Behavioral change, and Capacity building), also requires a renewed focus on other social determinants, in addition to addressing the governance challenges of the National Health Mission (NHM) and ICDS delivery mechanisms.

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UNIT 7 EMPLOYMENT

Structure

7.0 Objectives

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Constitutional Framework

7.3 Evolution

7.4 Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Programme-Main Provisions

7.5 Implementation of the Law: An Assessment

7.6 Conclusion

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7.8 Annexure1

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- understand employment in terms of GoI's largest livelihood security Programme, namely Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme;
- explain the major provisions of the MNREGA 2005;
- describe social audit;
- elaborate the problems being faced when it comes to the implementation of the Law; and
- suggest some measures that can enable an effective management of the Law.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (or NREGA, renamed as the 'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act' or MGNREGA in 2009), is an Indian labor law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the 'right to work'. This Act was passed in August 23 2005 under the UPA government.

It aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least '120 (now, as 120 days instead of 100 days) days per household per year of wage employment in a financial year to at least one member of every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Women were guaranteed one third of the jobs made available under the MGNREGA. Rather, it is perhaps the largest and most ambitious social security and public works programme in the world.

The MGNREGA was initiated with the objective of enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year, to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Another aim of MGNREGA was to create durable assets (such as roads, canals, ponds and wells). Employment was to be provided within 5 km of an applicant's residence and minimum wages were to be paid. If work is not provided within 15 days of applying, applicants are entitled to an unemployment allowance. That is, if the government fails to provide employment, it has to provide certain unemployment allowances to those people. Thus, employment under MGNREGA is a legal entitlement.

MGNREGA is to be implemented mainly by Gram Panchayats (GPs). The involvement of contractors is banned.

Apart from providing economic security and creating rural assets, other things said to promote MGNREGA are that it can help in protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural-urban migration, and fostering social equity, among others.

The law stated providing many safeguards to promote its effective management and implementation. The Act explicitly mentions the principles and agencies for implementation, list of allowed works, financing pattern, monitoring and evaluation, and detailed measures to ensure transparency and accountability.

7.2 CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The Act aims to follow the Directive Principles of State Policy enunciated in Part IV of the Constitution of India. The law by providing a 'right to work' is consistent with Article 41 that directs the State to secure to all citizens the right to work. The statute also seeks to protect the environment through rural works, which is consistent with Article 48A that directs the State to protect the environment.

In accordance with the Article 21 of the Constitution of India that guarantees the right to life with dignity to every citizen of India, this MGNREG Act imparts dignity to the rural people through an assurance of livelihood security. The Fundamental Right enshrined in Article 16 of the Constitution of India guarantees equality of opportunity in matters of public employment and prevents the State from discriminating against anyone in matters of employment on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, place of residence or any of them. MGNREGA also follows Article 46 that requires the State to promote the interests of and work for the economic uplift of the SCs and STs and protect them from discrimination and exploitation.

Article 40 mandates the State to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority, as may be necessary to enable them to function, as units of self-government. Conferring the primary responsibility of implementation on Gram Panchayats, the Act adheres to this constitutional principle. Also the process of decentralization initiated by 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India that granted a constitutional status to the Panchayats and further reinforced by MGNREGA that endowed these rural self-government institutions with authority to implement the law.

7.3 EVOLUTION

Since 1960, 30 years were expended in struggling to find suitable employment schemes in India's vast rural hinterland. The experiences of these decades provided important lessons to the government. These included the 'Rural Manpower Programme,' which exposed the tribulations of financial management, the 'Crash Scheme for Rural Employment' on planning for outcomes, a 'Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Programme' of labor-intensive works, the 'Drought Prone Area Programme' of integrated rural development, 'Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Laborers Scheme' of rural economic development, the 'Food for Work Programme' (FWP) of holistic development and better coordination with the states, the 'National Rural Employment Programme' (NREP) of community development, and the 'Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme' with a focus on landless households. The Planning Commission later approved the mentioned scheme and it was adopted on a national scale.

On 1 April 1989, to converge employment generation, infrastructure development, and food security in rural areas, the government integrated 'National Rural Employment Programme' (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) into a new scheme namely the Jawahar Rozgaar Yojana (JRY). The most significant change was the decentralization of implementation by involving the local people through PRIs that could lead to a limited role of bureaucracy.

On 1 April 1999, the JRY was revamped and renamed to Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) with a similar objective. The role of PRIs was further reinforced with the local self-government at the village level called the 'Village Panchayats,' as the sole implementing authorities.

On 25 September 2001 to converge employment generation, infrastructure development, and food security in rural areas, the government integrated Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) and JGSY into a new scheme 'Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana' (SGRY). The role of PRIs was retained with the 'Village Panchayats,' as the sole implementing authorities. Yet again due to implementation issues, it was merged with National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in 2006.

7.4 MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME-MAIN PROVISIONS

At the national level, the registration process involves an application to the Gram Panchayat and issue of job cards. The wage employment must be provided within 15 days of the date of application. The work entitlement of '120 (now, as 120 days instead of 100 days) days per household per year can be shared between different adult members of the same household.

The law also lists permissible works: water conservation and water harvesting; drought proofing including afforestation; irrigation works; restoration of traditional water bodies; land development; flood control; rural connectivity; and works notified by the government. The Act sets a minimum limit to the wage-material ratio as 60:40. The provision of accredited engineers, worksite facilities, and a weekly report on worksites is also mandated by the Act.

Furthermore, the Act sets a minimum limit to the wages, to be paid with gender equality, either on a time-rate¹ basis or on a piece-rate² basis. The States are required to evolve a set of norms for the measurement of works and schedule of rates. Unemployment allowance must be paid, if the work is not provided within the statutory limit of 15 days.

The law stipulates Gram Panchayats to have a single bank account for MGNREGA works, which shall be subjected to public scrutiny. To promote transparency and accountability, the Act mandates ‘monthly squaring of accounts’³. To ensure public accountability through public vigilance, the MGNREGA designates ‘social audits,’ as key to its implementation.

For evaluation of outcomes, the law also requires management of data and maintenance of records, like registers related to employment, job cards, assets, muster rolls and complaints, by the implementing agencies at the village, block, and state levels.

The legislation specifies the role of the state in ensuring transparency and accountability through upholding the right to information and disclosing information proactively, preparation of annual reports by the Central Employment Guarantee Council for the Parliament and State Employment Guarantee Councils for state legislatures, undertaking mandatory financial audits by each district along with physical audit, taking action on audit reports, developing a Citizen's Charter, establishing vigilance and monitoring committees, and developing a grievance redressal system.

The Act recommends establishment of ‘Technical Resource Support Groups’⁴ at district, state, and central levels and active use of Information Technology, like creation of a ‘Monitoring and Information System (MIS)’ and a MGNREGA website to assure quality in implementation of MGNREGA through technical support.

¹ The time allotted for producing one unit of output or for completing a predetermined amount of work by a single worker or by a group of workers.

² A way of paying for work that is based on a fixed rate for a particular amount done rather than the time it takes to do the job:

³ To make certain that you have paid and received all the money that you owed or those others owed you.

⁴ Over the last few decades, outsourcing has been widely accepted as the key project management strategy for the efficient utilization of the organizations' resources. The Technical Resource Support Group has successfully provided Logistics Support for national level implementation of prestigious social sector projects of Government of India and International Funding Agencies. For each of these projects, the Group has performed, as a strategic partner consultancy organization providing core competence in the specified areas.

The law allows convergence of MGNREGA with other programmes. As MGNREGA intends to create 'additional' employment, the convergence has to make sure that it is not affecting employment provided by other programmes.

Ex-Prime Minister of India Shri Manmohan Singh released anthologies of research studies on the MGNREGA called 'MGNREGA Sameeksha'⁵ in New Delhi on 14 July 2012, about a year before the CAG report. Aruna Roy and Nikhil Dey mentioned that "the MGNREGA Sameeksha is a significant innovation to evaluate policy and delivery". The anthology draws on independent assessments of MGNREGA conducted by Indian Institutes of Management (IIM), Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), and others in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published from 2008 to 2012. The Prime Minister said:

"The Mahatma Gandhi NREGA story in numbers is a story worth telling... the scheme scores high on inclusiveness...no welfare scheme in recent memory has caught the imagination of the people, as much as, MGNREGA has ... under which ₹1,10,000 crore have been spent to pay wages to 1,200 crore people."

- **Social audit**

Civil society organizations (CSOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), political representatives, civil servants, and workers of Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh collectively organize social audits to prevent corruption under the MGNREGA. As the corruption is attributed to the secrecy in governance, the 'Jansunwai' or public hearing and the Right to Information Act, enacted in 2005, are used to fight this secrecy. Official records obtained using RTI are read out at the public hearing to identify and rectify irregularities. "This process of reviewing official records and determining whether state reported expenditures reflect the actual monies spent on the ground are referred to, as social audit." Participation of informed citizens promotes collective responsibility and awareness about entitlements.

The process of a social audit



⁵ MGNREGA SAMEEKSHA, An Anthology of Research Studies on the MGNREG Act 2005,2006-2012, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, ORIENT Black swan Private Limited, Hyderabad

A continuous process of social audit on NREGA works involves public vigilance and verification at the stipulated 11 stages of implementation: registration of families; distribution of job cards; receipt of work applications; selection of suitable public works; preparation of technical estimates; work allocation; implementation and supervision; payment of wages; payment of unemployment allowance; evaluation of outcomes; and mandatory social audit in the Gram Sabha or Social Audit Forum. The Gram Panchayat Secretary is designated, as the authority, responsible for carrying out the social audit at all stages. For some stages, the programme officer and the junior engineer is also responsible along with Sarpanch.

The statute designates the Gram Sabha meetings held to conduct social audit, as the 'Social Audit Forums' and spells out three steps to make them effective: publicity and preparation of documents; organizational and procedural aspects; and the mandatory agenda involving questions verifying compliance with norms specified at each of the 11 stages of implementation.⁶

An application under the RTI to access relevant official documents is the first step in social audit. Then the management personnel of the social audit verify these official records by conducting field visits. Finally, the 'Jansunwai' or public hearing is organised at two levels: the Panchayat or village level and the Mandal or block level. The direct public debate involving the beneficiaries, political representatives, civil servants and, above all, the government officers responsible for implementing the NREGA works highlights things like corruption (like the practice of rigging muster rolls-attendance registers) and also generates public awareness about the scheme.

These social audits on NREGA works in Rajasthan highlight: a significant demand for the scheme, less than 2 per cent corruption in the form of fudging of muster rolls, building the water harvesting infrastructure, as the first priority in the drought-prone districts; reduction of out-migration, and above all the women participation of more than 80 per cent in the employment guarantee scheme. The needs for effective management of tasks, timely payment of wages, and provision of support facilities at work sites are also emphasized.

To assess the effectiveness of the mass social audits on MGNREGA works in Andhra Pradesh, a World Bank study investigated the effect of the social audit on the level of public awareness, particularly on its effect on the MGNREGA implementation, and its efficacy, as a grievance redressal mechanism. The study found that the public awareness about the MGNREGA increased from about 30 per cent that was before the social audit to about 99 per cent after the social audit. Furthermore, the efficacy of MGNREGA implementation increased from an average of about 60 per cent to about 97 per cent.

Now we will delve on the assessment of the Act in the forthcoming Section.

⁶ Registration of families; distribution of job cards; receipt of work applications; selection of suitable public works; preparation of technical estimates; work allocation; implementation and supervision; payment of wages; payment of unemployment allowance; evaluation of outcomes; and mandatory social audit in the Gram Sabha or Social Audit Forum.

7.5 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW: AN ASSESSMENT

Academic research has focused on many dimensions of the MGNREGA, namely economic security, self-targeting, women's empowerment, asset creation, corruption, how the scheme impacts agricultural wages. An early overall assessment in the north Indian states suggested that MGNREGA was "making a difference to the lives of the rural poor, slowly but surely."

Another fundamental objective of MGNREGA was to improve the bargaining power of labor, who often faced exploitative market conditions. Several studies have found that agricultural wages have increased significantly, especially for women, since the inception of the scheme. This indicates that overall wage levels have increased due to the Act. However, further research highlights that the key benefit of the scheme lies in the reduction of wage volatility. This highlights that MGNREGA may be an effective insurance scheme. Ongoing research efforts try to evaluate the overall welfare effects of the scheme; a particular focus has been to understand whether the scheme has reduced migration into urban centres for casual work.

Another important aspect of MGNREGA is the potential for women's empowerment by providing opportunities for paid work, as well as mechanisms to ensure equal pay for equal work. One third of all employment is reserved for women, and there is a provision for equal wages to men and women, provision for child care facilities at the worksite - these are three important provisions for women in the Act. More recent studies have suggested that women's participation has remained high, though there are inter-state variations. A study in villages of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat studied the effect on short term migration and child welfare and found that among children who do not migrate, school grade completion is higher. The study found that demand for MGNREGA work is higher, even though migrant wages are higher too.

Over the last decade, it has been observed that more than half the MGNREGA funds have been spent on water related projects. This was very much needed because water bodies have been shrinking, especially in rural India. India became a water deficient nation 5 years ago, and every year since then, the water level has shrunk further. Over Rs. 20,000 crores under MGNREGA has been spent each year during the last decade 2001-2010 on developing rural water bodies, wells, aquifers⁷, catchment areas⁸, etc.

There have not been too many detailed studies on asset creation. A few studies focusing on the potential for asset creation under MGNREGA suggest that (a) the potential is substantial; (b) in some places, it is being realized, and (c) lack of staff, especially technical staff, rather than lack of material is to be blamed for

⁷ A layer of permeable rock, sand, or gravel through which ground water flows, containing enough water to supply wells and springs.

⁸ The area of land that drains rainfall into a river or lake.

poor realization of this potential. Others have pointed out that water harvesting and soil conservation works promoted through MGNREGA "could have high positive results on environment security and biodiversity, and environment conservation." A study conducted by researchers at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru and other collaborators found that activities related to natural resource management under the MGNREGA can capture 249 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030. India has placed emphasis on MGNREGA, as a contributor to carbon sequestration in its Third Biennial Update Report submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2021.

Corruption in government programmes has remained a serious concern, and MGNREGA has been no exception. According to recent estimates, wage corruption in MGNREGA has declined from about 50% in 2007-8 and to between 4-30% in 2009-10. Much of this improvement is attributable to the move to pay MGNREGA wages through bank and post office accounts. Some of the success in battling corruption can also be attributed to the strong provisions for community monitoring.

However, when it comes to the performance audit report 2013 by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, we come across a number of limitations in the implementation of the Act.

A detailed discussion on the performance audit 2013 is given below:

Performance Audit Report 2013

The second performance audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India covered 3,848 gram panchayats (GPs) in 28 states and 4 union territories (UTs) from April 2007 to March 2012. This comprehensive survey, known as the Performance Audit Report 2013 by CAG documents the lapses in implementation of the Act.

The main problems identified in the audit included: a fall in the level of employment, low rates of completion of works (only 30.3 per cent of planned works had been completed), poor planning (in one-third of Gram Panchayats, the planning process mandated by the Act had not been followed), lack of public awareness partly due to poor implementation of information, education, and communication (IEC) by the state governments; shortage of staff (e.g., Gram Rozgar Sewaks⁹ had not been appointed in some states), and so on.

The comprehensive assessment of the performance of the law by the CAG revealed serious lapses arising mainly due to lack of public awareness, mismanagement, and institutional incapacity. Even though the mass social audits have a statutory mandate of Section 17 (As outlined in Chapter 11 of the

⁹ For implementation of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), the State Government recruits Gram Rozgar Sevak (GRS) through Block Development Officer and appointment agreement with Pradhan. One Gram Rozgar Sevak (GRS) will be engaged on contract in every Gram Panchayat. The main duty of the GRS is to help the technical person (i.e. Nirman Sahayak, T.A. etc.) to strengthen the MGNREGA works and also other official works related to MGNREGA.

MGNREGA Operational Guidelines), only seven states have the institutional capacity to facilitate the social audits, as per prescribed norms. Although the Central Council is mandated to establish a central evaluation and monitoring system, as per the MGNREGA Operational Guidelines, even after all the years it is yet to fulfill the MGNREGA directive. Further, the CAG audit reports discrepancies in the maintenance of prescribed basic records in up to half of the gram panchayats (GPs), which inhibits the critical evaluation of the MGNREGA outcomes. The unreliability of Management Information System (MIS) due to significant disparity between the data in the MIS and the actual official documents is also reported.

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Even though the mass social audits have a statutory mandate of Section 17 (As outlined in Chapter 11 of the MGNREGA Operational Guidelines), only seven states have the institutional capacity to facilitate the social audits, as per prescribed norms. Although the Central Council is mandated to establish a central evaluation and monitoring system, as per the MGNREGA Operational Guidelines, even after six years it is yet to fulfill the MGNREGA directive. Further, the CAG audit reports discrepancies in the maintenance of prescribed basic records in up to half of the gram panchayats (GPs), which inhibits the critical evaluation of the MGNREGA outcomes. The unreliability of Management Information System (MIS) due to significant disparity between the data in the MIS and the actual official documents is also reported.

To increase public awareness, the intensification of the Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities is recommended. To improve management of outcomes, it recommended proper maintenance of records at the gram panchayat (GP) level. Further the Central Council is recommended to establish a central evaluation and monitoring system for 'a national level, comprehensive and independent evaluation of the scheme.' The CAG also recommends a timely payment of unemployment allowance to the rural poor and a wage material ratio of 60:40 in the NREGA works. Moreover, for effective financial management, the CAG recommends proper maintenance of accounts, in a uniform format, on a monthly basis and also enforcing the statutory guidelines to ensure transparency in the disposal of funds. For capacity building, the CAG recommends an increase in staff hiring to fill the large number of vacancies.

For the first time, the CAG also included a survey of more than 38,000 MGNREGA beneficiaries.

A major criticism of the MGNREGA is that a lot of money disbursed by the government gets siphoned off by middlemen, thus leaving a number of MGNREGA workers either with unpaid wages or less than standard wages. In Mahuadand, Jharkhand, most of the people who had worked under the MGNREGA did not get paid, while some either got paid less than stipulated or were given 5 kg of rice by private contractors instead.

Another criticism of MGNREGA is that it is making agriculture less profitable. Landholders often oppose it on these grounds. The big farmer's point of view can be summed up, as follows: “landless laborers are lazy and they don't want to work on farms, as they can get money without doing anything at MGNREGA worksites.” Farmers may have to sometimes sell their land to the corporate, which prompts corporate farming.¹⁰

Economists have described NREGA, as “an inefficient instrument of shifting income to the poor” – the general notion being that it takes five rupees to transfer one rupee to MGNREGA workers. Economists have termed it, as unsuccessful suggesting that schemes such as the MGNREGA need to be junked, saying that any scheme with 85 percent leakages can't be proclaimed to be “working successfully.”

The workers points of view can be summed up as: laborers do not get more than Rs. 80 in the private agricultural labor market. There is no farm work for several months. Few old age people, who are jobless for at least 8 months a year go to the places, where farm work is available. However, farmers employ only young and strong persons to work in their farms and reject the others and hence many go jobless most of the time, especially the old.

MGNREGA guarantees 100 days of wage employment to every rural household willing to take up manual labor. Performance Audit Report 2013 revealed that the intended beneficiaries had not been able to fully exercise their rights. In the gram panchayats audited, several deficiencies regarding registration of workers and delays or non-issue of job cards were noticed. Also, it was seen that obtaining a job card does not automatically translate into employment when demanded by the beneficiary. In the gram panchayats covered by the Report, it was noticed that in over 47,687 cases, the beneficiaries were neither provided employment on demand nor received unemployment allowance. Further, even after receiving employment, widespread instances of non-payment and delayed payment of wages were observed in 23 states. These cases demonstrate that considerable efforts were needed to provide adequate livelihood security.

¹⁰ Corporate farming is the practice of large-scale agriculture on farms owned or greatly influenced by large companies. This includes corporate ownership of farms and selling of agricultural products, as well as the roles of these companies in influencing agricultural education, research, and public policy through funding initiatives and lobbying efforts.

The scale of inadequacies in providing livelihood security could not be fully ascertained in view of the pervasive and extensive deficiencies in record maintenance at all levels. Non-maintenance or incorrect maintenance of basic records was noticed in 54 per cent of the GPs. In such a situation the legal guarantee of 100 days of employment on demand and other aspects of the implementation of the Scheme were not fully verifiable.

Irregularities were also noticed in the works undertaken under MGNREGS. Instances of works abandoned midway or not completed for a significant period were noticed. Works of Rs. 2,252.43 crore, which were undertaken under the Scheme, were not permissible. It was seen that 7, 69,575 works amounting to Rs. 4,070.76 crore were incomplete even after the period of one to five years. It was also noted that expenditure on works amounting to Rs. 6,547.35 crore did not result in creation of durable assets. Cases of diversion of funds for other uses were also seen in a large number of states. The larger issue, in relation to the works, was the non-adherence to the statutory 60:40 wage material ratio. The Ministry, in contravention of the Act, which stipulates that this ratio has to be maintained for each work, relaxed this provision. The Operational Guidelines issued by the Ministry stated that this ratio was to be maintained preferably at the gram panchayat, block, and district level. In a limited quantification exercise in 12 states and one UT, it was seen that the non-adherence to this ratio led to limited generation of 15.03 crore person days during the audit period.

Performance Audit mentions that the Act makes the Ministry legally responsible for monitoring the Scheme and giving such directions to the states, as necessary for its proper implementation. In fact, the Act requires the Ministry to set-up a Central Employment Guarantee Council that was to be responsible itself for monitoring the Scheme and suggesting improvements. The Council worked under the chairpersonship of the Minister of Rural Development and included other stakeholders. However, it was seen that the Council had done little in terms of monitoring of the Scheme. In the years of its existence, a few Council members conducted just 13 field visits and the Council had not put in place an effective system of monitoring and evaluation, as required under the Act. The monitoring mechanisms of the Ministry, as envisaged in the Operational Guidelines, also included the system of National Quality Monitors for verification and quality audits and an online MIS–NREGA Soft. It was seen that the Ministry was yet to operationalize the system of National Quality Monitors. Also, poor internal controls and lack of any cross-verification had seriously eroded the reliability and credibility of the data in the MIS. Instances of data manipulations were noted in audit. The Act and the Operational Guidelines require the states and the Panchayati Raj Institutions to monitor the implementation of the Scheme in a variety of ways. Gaps in the envisaged monitoring mechanisms were noticed in a large number of states. There were significant shortages in verification of works by state officials. Quality Monitors and Vigilance and Monitoring Committees had not been appointed in several states. Social audit remained ineffective to a large extent, as social audit units had not been established. Shortfalls in social audit were noted in a number of states.

There were deficiencies in the approval and release of funds by the Ministry. Numerous instances were noticed in, which the Ministry released grants in excess of demand and in breach of its own conditionalities. In fact, in 2010-11, the Ministry relaxed all conditionalities (except furnishing utilization certificate) associated with the release of funds. No basis for this decision was provided by the Ministry. As a result, Rs.1, 960.45 crore were released in the month of March 2011 alone, without exercising proper financial controls. Herein, the Ministry needed to take decisive steps to ensure proper implementation of the Scheme. It had to focus on developing intensive monitoring and evaluation systems, as envisaged in the Act, which was blatantly ignored.

An analysis of the data provided by the Central Employment Guarantee Council disclosed some adverse trends. The expenditure incurred under the Scheme had been stagnant for the last three years and actually showed a marginal decline in 2011-12. The experts noted that the decline in expenditure did have an aggravated effect on employment generation. Employment generated declined from 283.59 crore person days in 2009-10 to 216.34 crore person days in 2011-12. The completion of works also saw a significant decline in 2011-12.

Performance audit made an analysis of releases made to states for the period under review. Poverty data showed that three states, namely of Bihar, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh had 46 per cent of the rural poor in India, but accounted for only about 20 per cent of the total funds released under the Scheme. This would indicate that the poorest of poor were not fully able to exercise their rights under MGNREGA.

Other than the Performance Audit Report 2013, it was found that in 2013-14, the ratio of young workers among total MGNREGA workers was 13.64 per cent, which came down to 7.73 percent in 2017-18 before rising to 9.1 percent in 2018-19 and 10.06 percent in 2019-20. The trend shows that a steady decline in the proportion of young workers, those between 18 and 30. Under the Act the number of young workers has halted and has begun to rise in the wake of demonetization and the rollout of GST. This has been projected by a section of analysts, as a reflection of rural distress intensifying.

The comprehensive assessment of the performance of the law by the CAG revealed serious lapses arising mainly due to lack of public awareness, mismanagement, and institutional incapacity. The CAG suggested some corrective measures.

To increase public awareness, the intensification of the Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities is recommended. To improve management of outcomes, the Report recommended proper maintenance of records at the gram panchayat level. Further the Central Council recommended establishing a central evaluation and monitoring system for 'a national level, comprehensive, and independent evaluation of the scheme.' The CAG also recommended a timely payment of unemployment allowance to the rural poor and a wage material ratio of 60:40 in the NREGA works. Moreover, for effective financial management, the CAG recommends proper maintenance of accounts, in a uniform format, on a

monthly basis and also enforcing the statutory guidelines to ensure transparency in the disposal of funds. For capacity building, the CAG recommends an increase in staff hiring to fill the large number of vacancies. For the first time, the CAG also included a survey of more than 38,000 MGNREGA beneficiaries. Recently, the Finance Minister allocated Rs. 48,000 crore to MGNREGA, as a part of 2017 Union budget of India

ACTIVITY

Identify few districts in your State where MGNREGS is operational and see how the Programme is functioning.

7.6 CONCLUSION

Nonetheless MGNREGA's quantitative achievements have been striking, as since its inception in 2006, around ₹1,10,000 crore has gone directly, as wage payment to rural households and 1200 crore person-days of employment has been generated. On an average, 5 crore households have been provided employment every year since 2008. Eighty per cent of households are being paid directly through bank/post office accounts, and 10 crore new bank/post office accounts have been opened. The average wage per person-day has gone up by 81 per cent since the Scheme's inception, with state-level variations. The notified wage today varies from a minimum of ₹122 in Bihar and Jharkhand to ₹191 in the State of Haryana.

Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) have accounted for 51 per cent of the total person-days generated and women for 47 per cent, well above the mandatory 33 per cent, as required by the Act.

146 lakh works have been taken up since the beginning of the programme, of which about 60 per cent have been completed. 12 crore Job Cards (JCs) have been given and these along with the 9 crore muster rolls have been uploaded on the Management Information System (MIS), that is also available for public scrutiny. Since 2010–11, all details with regard to the expenditure of the MGNREGA are available on the MIS in the public domain.

To increase public awareness, the intensification of the Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities is recommended. To improve management of outcomes, it recommended proper maintenance of records at the gram panchayat (GP) level.

The CAG also recommends a timely payment of unemployment allowance to the rural poor and a wage material ratio of 60:40 in the NREGA works. Moreover, for effective financial management, the CAG recommends proper maintenance of accounts, in a uniform format, on a monthly basis and also enforcing the statutory guidelines to ensure transparency in the disposal of funds.



It is perhaps the largest and most ambitious social security and public works programme in the world. ... Soundness and high potential of the MGNREGA are well established.... It is also a message that comes loud and clear from the resounding popularity of MGNREGA - today, about one-fourth of all rural households participate in the programme every year.

7.7 REFERENCES

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7.8 ANNEXURE1

DEEN DAYAL ANTYODAYA YOJANA –NATIONAL LIVELIHOODS MISSION

The Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana¹¹ –National Livelihoods Mission- DAY-NRLM- is essentially a poverty relief programme of the Central government. It was launched as ‘Aajeevika – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)’ by the GoI’s Ministry of Rural Development in the year 2011. It was renamed, as DAY-NRLM in November 2015.¹²

- The Mission is to reduce poverty by enabling the poor households to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities, resulting in an appreciable improvement in their livelihoods on a sustainable basis, through building strong grassroots institutions for the poor.¹³
- The programme is supported partially by the World Bank.
- It aims at creating effective and efficient institutional platforms to enable the rural poor to increase their household income by means of sustainable livelihood enhancements and better access to financial services.
- Additionally, the poor would also be enabled to attain improved access to rights, public services, and other entitlements.
- The Mission aims at harnessing the inherent capabilities of the poor and equips them with capacities such as knowledge, information, tools, finance, skills, and collectivization for them to take part in the economy.
- The Mission started with an agenda to cover 7 crore rural poor households via self-help groups (SHGs) and federated institutions and support them for livelihoods collectives in 8-10 years.
- In 2021, the Union Cabinet had approved a special package worth Rs. 520 crore in the Union Territories (UTs) of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh for a period of five years (till the financial year 2023-24) under the DAY-NRLM. The decision is in line with the government’s aim to universalize all centrally sponsored beneficiary-oriented schemes in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh in a time-bound manner.

The move towards a demand-driven strategy enabling the states to formulate their own livelihoods-based poverty reduction action plan is at the core of the Mission.

As part of ‘Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav,’ a total of 152 Centres for Financial Literacy & Service Delivery (CFL&SD) (SAKSHAM Centres) across 77 districts of 13 states were launched under DAY-NRLM during October 4th and 8th 2021.

¹¹ Yojana -Plan

¹² <https://aajeevika.gov.in/>

¹³ A similar scheme, National Urban Livelihood Mission- DAY-NULM- is run for urban development and livelihood by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation.

The objective of SAKSHAM Centres is to provide financial literacy and facilitate delivery of financial services to SHG members and the rural poor.

CFL&SD would act, as a one-stop solution/single window system for the basic financial needs of SHG households in rural areas.

These Centers will be managed by the SHG network with the help of trained Community Resource Persons (CRPs).

Major Features

The chief features of the Mission are, as follows:

- Universal social mobilization: A minimum of one lady member of a rural poor household (with particular emphasis on the marginal sections) is to be brought in the network of an SHG.
- Participatory identification of poor.
- Community funds, as resources in perpetuity, to strengthen the financial management capacity of the poor.
- Financial inclusion.
- Livelihoods: the Mission focuses on promoting and stabilizing the existing livelihood structures of the poor through its three pillars:
 - Vulnerability reduction and livelihoods enhancement – through expanding existing livelihoods and tapping new livelihood opportunities in both the farm and non-farm sectors.
 - Employment – building skills.
 - Enterprises – promoting self-employment.

It places a high priority on convergence and partnerships with other government schemes of the Rural Development Ministry. It also seeks to have linkages with the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Sub-schemes under NRLM

There are some sub-schemes under NRLM that we will now discuss. To begin with is the Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana (AGEY).

Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana (AGEY) ¹⁴

- This Yojana was initiated in 2017.
- It aims at providing alternative sources of livelihood to members of SHGs under the parent Yojana by enabling them to offer public transport services in backward rural areas.
- The Yojana offers affordable, safe, and community-monitored rural transport services to connect villages in remote areas with key amenities & services

¹⁴ <https://www.indiafilings.com/learn/aajeevika-grameen-express-yojana-agey/>

(access to health, markets, and education) for the overall economic development of the region.

Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)¹⁵

- The main objective of this Project is to empower women in agriculture by making systematic investments to enhance their participation and productivity.
- The programme also seeks to create and sustain agriculture-based livelihoods concerning women in rural areas.
- Other aims are to ensure food and nutrition in the households, enable better access to services and inputs for women, improve the managerial capabilities of women, etc.

Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)¹⁶

Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) envisions the generation of sustainable self-employment opportunities for rural poor youth, facilitating them to engage effectively with the market, and help generate wealth locally. Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) under the SVEP have stepped up, as effective frontline responders and reached the last mile ensuring an immediate relief to the rural communities and the most vulnerable population during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The Programme will address the three main constraints concerning rural startups:

- A missing knowledge ecosystem
- A missing financial ecosystem
- A missing incubation ecosystem
- SVEP is a sub-scheme of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM), Ministry of Rural Development and has been implemented since 2016.
- Progress: It has extended business support services and capital infusion to 153 blocks of 23 states, as of August 2020.
- Partner: Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), Ahmedabad is the technical support partner of SVEP.

Aims

- Support the rural poor to come out of poverty.
- Support the people to set up enterprises and provide support until the enterprises stabilize.
- Providing self-employment opportunities with financial assistance and training in business management and soft skills.

¹⁵ Mahila+Kisan+Sashaktikaran+Pariyojana

¹⁶ Start-up+Village+Entrepreneurship+Programme

- Create local community cadres for promotion of enterprises.

Features

- It addresses three major pillars of rural start-ups namely finances, incubation, and skill ecosystems.
- It promotes both individual and group enterprises, majorly in manufacturing, trading, and service sectors.
- It invests on building the capacities of the entrepreneurs to run the businesses profitably based on the local demand and ecosystem.
- Investments are also made on the use of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to create standard e-learning modules for minimizing the transmission loss in technical aspects like a business plan and profit and loss account preparations.

Activities

Activities under SVEP are strategically designed to promote rural enterprises with a few key areas.

- One of the key areas is to develop a pool of Community Resource Persons-Enterprise Promotion (CRP-EP) who are local and support entrepreneurs setting-up rural enterprises.
- Another key area is to promote the Block Resource Centers (BRCs) in SVEP blocks, to monitor and manage the community resource persons, appraise SVEP loan applications and act, as the repository of enterprise-related information in the concerned block.

BRCs play the role to support a sustainable revenue model to operate effectively and independently.

SVEP established local markets (rural haat), which motivated entrepreneurs to take up demand-based production, advertise their enterprise, and increase earning opportunities.

A typical rural haat is mostly indigenous, flexible, and multi-layered structure, which accommodates the economic activities of various natures. Local market/haat/bazaar serves, as an important economic platform, where a range of products is traded.

