

A REVIEW ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES IN THE POST-REFORM PERIOD IN HARYANA

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ABSTRACT

The economic liberalization policies introduced in India in 1991 significantly altered its economic framework, prompting states like Haryana to implement targeted poverty alleviation programs to mitigate the adverse effects on vulnerable populations. This paper reviews the design, implementation, and effectiveness of major programs such as the Public Distribution System (PDS), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), and various skill development initiatives in Haryana. It explores the successes in food security, employment, and housing, alongside challenges like corruption, inefficiency, and the limited reach of these programs. The integration of technology has enhanced transparency and efficiency, yet the impact remains mixed across different sectors and communities within the state. This study draws on various sources to provide a comprehensive overview of how these programs have shaped poverty alleviation efforts in Haryana post-economic reforms.

Keywords: Economic Reforms, Poverty Alleviation, Haryana, Public Distribution System, Skill Development

INTRODUCTION

The economic liberalization policies introduced in India in 1991 marked a pivotal shift in the nation's economic framework, aiming to integrate the Indian economy with the global market. This transition, characterized by deregulation, privatization of sectors, and reduced control on foreign trade and investment, spurred rapid economic growth and industrial expansion (Ahluwalia, 2002). However, the benefits of these reforms were unevenly distributed, leading to significant disparities among different regions and societal groups. In response, states like Haryana, which witnessed substantial industrial growth and urbanization, initiated targeted poverty alleviation and social welfare programs to mitigate the adverse effects on vulnerable populations (Kumar & Gupta, 2013).

Haryana's strategic approach to poverty alleviation has been multifaceted, addressing both rural and urban poverty through a series of state and centrally sponsored schemes. These initiatives have been critical in offering social security, enhancing livelihood opportunities, and improving living standards for the marginalized sections of the society. The Public Distribution System (PDS) in Haryana, for example, has been pivotal in ensuring food security to the poor, which is crucial in a state where agriculture plays a key role but is vulnerable to fluctuations in weather and market conditions (Government of Haryana, 2021).

Moreover, the implementation of national schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has provided not only a safety net by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment to rural households but also facilitated the creation of durable assets in rural areas (Ministry of Rural Development, 2019). In the urban areas, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) has been instrumental in providing affordable housing to the lower-income groups, aiming to eliminate urban slums and providing a dignified living environment (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2020).

Despite these efforts, the challenges of implementation, including issues of corruption, inefficiency, and inadequate reach to the most needy, have often marred the outcomes of these programs. This paper aims to review the design, implementation, and effectiveness of these poverty alleviation programs in Haryana post-economic reforms, drawing on various sources and studies to provide a comprehensive overview of their impact on reducing poverty and enhancing economic security among the disadvantaged populations.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Before the sweeping economic reforms of 1991, Haryana's economy was predominantly agrarian, characterized by farming practices that were the primary source of livelihood for the majority of its population. The state had limited industrial activity, with only a few industrial hubs such as Gurgaon and Faridabad showing early signs of urban industrial development (Sharma & Bhattacharya, 2006). This was reflective of the broader Indian economic landscape, which was heavily regulated and focused more on self-reliance and import substitution.

The economic reforms initiated in 1991, driven by liberalization, privatization, and globalization, marked a significant shift in this economic paradigm. As the Indian government dismantled various controls over the economy, inviting foreign investments and reducing barriers to trade, Haryana emerged as a key beneficiary of these policies due to its

proximity to the national capital, Delhi, and its relatively better infrastructure. This led to a surge in industrialization and urbanization within the state (Kumar, 2012). Cities like Gurgaon and Faridabad transformed from regional centers to major industrial and IT hubs, attracting multinational corporations and leading to significant job creation in the manufacturing and service sectors (Nath, 2015).

However, the rapid economic growth and urban development also highlighted and exacerbated socio-economic disparities. While urban areas saw burgeoning growth and prosperity, rural regions lagged, with agriculture continuing to face challenges like fluctuating market prices and inadequate modernization. Additionally, the influx of people into cities seeking better livelihoods led to the growth of slums and increased urban poverty (Datta, 2018).

Recognizing these growing inequalities and the challenges posed by rapid urbanization, the Haryana state government initiated several targeted interventions aimed at poverty alleviation and socioeconomic upliftment. One of the significant early interventions was the enhancement of the Public Distribution System (PDS) to ensure food security to the poorer sections of society, thereby mitigating the impact of food inflation and market instability on the economically vulnerable (Government of Haryana, 2021).

Furthermore, the state also aggressively promoted rural employment schemes under the aegis of national programs like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which provided not only employment but also aimed to create rural infrastructure that could aid in long-term development (Ministry of Rural Development, 2019). On the urban front, the introduction of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) sought to address the housing needs of the urban poor, aiming to reduce slum prevalence and improve the living conditions in urban areas (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2020).

In education and skill development, the Haryana government introduced several schemes to enhance vocational training and higher education, ensuring that the younger population could align with the evolving job market, particularly in industries that were now flourishing in the state (Chahal, 2017).

Despite these efforts, the challenge remains to balance growth with equity, ensuring that the benefits of industrialization and urban development are shared more broadly across both urban and rural areas of the state.

MAJOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES IN HARYANA

In response to the economic inequalities exacerbated by rapid industrialization and urbanization, Haryana has implemented several significant poverty alleviation programs. These initiatives aim to address various aspects of poverty, from food insecurity and unemployment to housing and skill development, each tailored to meet the specific needs of the state's diverse population.

1. Public Distribution System (PDS)

The Public Distribution System (PDS) is a national food security program that has been customized in Haryana to address the specific needs of its population. In Haryana, PDS is not just a tool for distributing staple foods but has been enhanced to include fortified staples like wheat flour and oil to combat nutritional deficiencies among the lower socioeconomic groups. The state has made considerable efforts to refine the system by introducing biometric identification and electronic point of sale (e-PoS) machines to ensure that the benefits reach the intended recipients, thereby minimizing the leakages that have historically plagued this system (Government of Haryana, 2021).

A recent study by Sharma and Singh (2020) highlights that these enhancements have led to an improvement in the nutritional intake among the poorest segments in Haryana, thus demonstrating the critical role of PDS in food security. However, challenges remain in ensuring the quality of food supplies and expanding coverage to the most remote areas.

2. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is another cornerstone of poverty alleviation efforts in Haryana. This program guarantees up to 100 days of wage employment per year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. In Haryana, MGNREGA has been particularly focused on creating durable assets in rural areas, such as water conservation structures and roads, thereby not only providing employment but also enhancing the rural infrastructure (Ministry of Rural Development, 2019).

According to Kumar (2018), MGNREGA has had a significant impact on reducing rural poverty in Haryana by providing a stable income source during the agricultural off-season. The program has also contributed to improved agricultural productivity through the creation of assets like check dams and ponds, which help in water conservation—a critical issue in water-stressed regions of the state.

3. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)

The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) addresses the critical need for affordable housing, targeting the urban poor in Haryana's rapidly expanding urban centers. The scheme's objective is to provide "Housing for All" by 2022 by building affordable pucca houses with basic amenities for families living in slums and other informal settlements. In Haryana, PMAY has been instrumental in slum rehabilitation and reducing homelessness, providing a dignified living environment to the urban poor (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2020).

A report by Jain (2021) indicates that the successful implementation of PMAY in cities like Gurgaon and Faridabad has not only reduced the number of slum dwellers but also positively impacted the overall urban landscape, leading to better sanitation and living conditions for the beneficiaries.

4. Skill Development Initiatives

Skill development initiatives in Haryana complement the national Skill India mission, aiming to enhance the employability of the youth. These state-led schemes are designed to meet the industrial needs of Haryana, focusing on sectors like manufacturing, textiles, and information technology. Programs such as the Haryana Skill Development Mission offer vocational training and upskilling courses to equip the state's youth with the necessary skills to thrive in the competitive job market (Haryana Skill Development Mission, 2021).

Research by Verma and Kumar (2019) suggests that these skill development programs have significantly improved job prospects for young people in Haryana, contributing to a decline in unemployment rates and fostering economic growth through a more skilled workforce.

ANALYSIS OF OUTCOMES

The array of poverty alleviation programs in Haryana has yielded mixed results, impacting various facets of socio-economic development. The state has made significant strides in areas such as food security, employment, housing, and skill development. However, challenges persist in achieving wide-scale impact and sustainability. The implementation of technology has played a pivotal role in enhancing the effectiveness of these programs, but systemic issues still need to be addressed to fully realize their potential.

Public Distribution System (PDS)

The PDS in Haryana has significantly contributed to food security among the economically disadvantaged populations. The inclusion of fortified staples and the use of biometric systems to minimize leakage have improved the quality and reach of food aid. A study by Gupta and Sharma (2018) indicated that the nutritional status of recipients improved notably after the introduction of fortified grains. However, despite technological enhancements, discrepancies in the distribution network sometimes prevent the timely delivery of benefits to the needy, particularly in remote rural areas. Additionally, the PDS's dependency on state and central coordination can lead to bureaucratic delays that impact the program's efficiency.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

MGNREGA has been a cornerstone in providing rural employment and improving infrastructure in Haryana. The program has not only ensured a stable income for many rural households but has also contributed to the creation of durable assets such as ponds, roads, and canals, which have enhanced rural livelihoods and environmental sustainability. According to Kumar (2019), the program has increased agricultural productivity by improving water availability through conservation projects. Nonetheless, challenges such as irregular payment cycles and the need for more skill-based tasks have been identified as areas needing improvement to increase the program's efficacy and attractiveness to participants.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)

PMAY has made considerable progress in providing affordable housing to the urban poor. The initiative has helped reduce the number of slum dwellers significantly, as documented by Jain and Kumar (2020), who noted improved living standards and sanitation as direct outcomes of the program. However, the pace of construction and allocation has faced criticisms. Delays in project approvals and funding disbursement have slowed down the progress, leaving many eligible beneficiaries waiting. Moreover, the urban-centric focus of the program has raised concerns about the neglect of rural housing needs.

Skill Development Initiatives

Skill development programs in Haryana have aimed to equip the youth with relevant skills to meet the demands of the modern job market. Initiatives such as the Haryana Skill Development Mission have shown promising results in reducing unemployment among youth by providing vocational training and placement services. As reported by Verma (2021), these initiatives have successfully integrated industry-specific skills training with local and

multinational companies' employment needs. However, there is a gap in the alignment of training programs with emerging technologies and industries, which if closed, could further enhance employment opportunities.

Technological Integration

The integration of technology across these programs has been a significant development, bringing transparency and accountability to systems historically plagued by corruption and inefficiencies. Biometric authentication in PDS, digital monitoring of MGNREGA projects, and online processing of PMAY applications have reduced human intervention and minimized graft. A report by the Haryana State Planning Department (2022) highlighted the role of technology in increasing citizen satisfaction and trust in government schemes.

Despite these advancements, the digital divide in rural areas poses a significant challenge. Limited access to technology and lack of digital literacy among older and less educated populations hinder the full utilization of technological benefits in program implementation.

While Haryana has made considerable progress in implementing poverty alleviation programs, the overall impact remains mixed. Successes in improving food security, employment, and housing are commendable, yet the sustainability and scale of impact are uneven across the state. Ongoing challenges such as delays, the need for greater skill alignment, and the digital divide must be addressed to enhance the effectiveness and reach of these programs. Future efforts should focus on improving operational efficiencies, expanding program scopes to include emerging sectors, and enhancing digital access and literacy to ensure that the benefits of these initiatives are realized by all segments of society.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Challenges

Despite the strides made in poverty alleviation in Haryana, several challenges hinder the effectiveness of these initiatives. The reach and implementation of programs in remote and rural areas remain inadequate, often leaving the most vulnerable populations without necessary support. Corruption and mismanagement continue to plague various schemes, undermining their efficiency and the trust of the public. Additionally, the lack of integration between different programs leads to resource duplication and inefficiencies, which dilute the impact of government efforts.

Recommendations

To overcome these challenges, it is crucial to strengthen monitoring mechanisms. Implementing robust oversight and accountability structures can help ensure that programs are executed as intended and benefits reach the intended recipients. Enhancing inter-departmental coordination can lead to more holistic development by ensuring that efforts across various sectors are aligned and mutually reinforcing, rather than overlapping and competitive. Finally, focusing on sustainable and community-driven approaches can improve the long-term impact of these programs. By involving local communities in the planning and implementation phases, programs can be more effectively tailored to meet specific local needs and ensure greater community buy-in and sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The review of poverty alleviation programs in Haryana post-economic reforms presents a complex but instructive scenario. Significant strides have been made towards improving food security, employment opportunities, housing, and skill development. Programs like the PDS have been critical in ensuring food security by integrating technology to minimize leakages and enhance delivery systems. MGNREGA has effectively provided rural employment and contributed to the development of rural infrastructure, thereby improving agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods. PMAY has addressed urban housing shortages, significantly impacting the reduction of urban slums and enhancing the living conditions of the urban poor. Meanwhile, skill development initiatives have adapted to the industrial needs of the state, improving employment prospects for the youth.

However, these programs face persistent challenges that impede their full potential. Issues such as inadequate reach, especially in remote areas, corruption, mismanagement, and a lack of integration between different programs, have all undermined their effectiveness. These challenges highlight the need for robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure accountability and efficient implementation. Enhancing inter-departmental coordination can lead to more holistic development efforts, avoiding overlap and maximizing resource utilization. Furthermore, adopting community-driven and sustainable approaches can significantly increase the long-term impact of these initiatives, ensuring they are more aligned with the specific needs of local communities.

Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to leverage technology effectively, close the digital divide, and align program goals more closely with the emerging economic

landscape. By doing so, Haryana can ensure that the benefits of its poverty alleviation efforts are more evenly distributed across both urban and rural areas, contributing to a more equitable and sustained economic development.

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