

Urban Poverty and Poverty Alleviation Programs: An Analysis

Dr. M. Manohar

Faculty in Public Administration

Nizam College, Osmania University, Hyderabad

Email: manoharmadar@gmail.com

Abstract

Understanding the nature of Poverty and its causes is one of the most buffing aspects of discourse on poverty Alleviation. Defining poverty is one of the most challenging tasks for scholars. Because according to some view we cannot look at it from a very narrow perspective of per capita income or G.N.P. When groups and individuals suffer deprivation of various kinds, the exploitation of children or gender-based discrimination. Similarly, is poverty not inherent in the origin of an individual. in what kind of home you are born or where you are born. What are the chances of marginal landless farmer children having ever a chance of being liberated from the misery and drudgery of life in a forlorn forest or desert area in countries like India, the practice of bonded labor for instance is the legacy of decades of countries of deprivation.

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Dr. M. Manohar

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Besides defining poverty, there is another aspect that we have to take into account i.e. while discussing the nature of rural and urban poverty can we deal with them in compartments or not the push and pull factors interrelated in problems relating to urban and rural poverty. Villagers leaving famine or drought-stricken villages to slums of metro cities become subjects of study under the rubric of urban poverty. A clear definition of poverty is very much important as it is directly related to the measurement of poverty. How long people suffer deprivation is a result of poverty and the intensity of deprivation is one of the most important means to monitor development and to assess the performance of pupil agencies. The link between income level and level of deprivation is often to be weak as many with income above the poverty line suffer serious deprivation and some below the poverty line do not. The income-based poverty line for the whole country does not allow for a high cost of living in big cities. No single poverty line can take into account the large differences in the availability and cost of food, and shelter. water among different locations within a single large city., sanitation, and health care services. There is no uniform living cost among different urban centers in a country or even among different locations within a single large city. The population will grow 50 percent over the next 50 years, and almost 100 percent of its countries that are poor and least able to handle it. Expressing his fears about poverty promoting terrorism, he remarked, In effect we have to create more opportunities for those left behind by progress thus reducing the pool of potential terrorists. The wealthy world has to accept its obligation to promote more economic opportunity and help reduce poverty.

Urbanization has been taking place at a very accelerated pace. In keeping with the global trend there has been a massive growth of urbanization in India. In 1901 the urban population was 62.28 million and had reached 350 million by 2000, constituting one-third of the total population of the country. The United Nations Human Development Report of 1990 found 48 percent of the country's population living below the poverty line at the rate of 30 and 18 percent for rural and urban areas. These figures claimed to have declined because of the measures taken by the government for poverty alleviation during the last decade. Incidence of poverty varies from state to state –Bihar is the poorest with 49.5 percent and Manipur has the lowest percentage 12.3 percent living below the poverty line. Though there are many challenges posed by urbanization trends, the most demanding of them is urban poverty. The National Commission on Urbanization has drawn pointed attention to the most brutal and inhuman living conditions in urban areas with a large section of people living in squatter settlements.

According to a study conducted by the National Institute of Urban Affairs, 68 percent of the urban poor were women and children. If one adds to this the aged and the disabled the customary perception of the urban poor changes. This aspect has been forcefully brought out by a distinguished authority on human settlements Mr. Jorge; E. Hardoy. According to him the most vulnerable urban group in the future will be children. Millions of children will be struggling to survive alone or with their families unless a massive effort is launched to create conditions that substantially reduce the number of households leading lives of deprivation without stable or adequate income without access to the indispensable services and constantly and facing fear as urban violence grows. He continues that the future cities of the third world will be very different from the cities we know. There will be differences not only in size and population but also in account of their age and labor structure. They will be cities of adolescents and children. Many will work before the minimum age established by law because their incomes are crucial for their families and their own survival. Most will not complete primary education even though completing primary school is a family aspiration. Many will die young or live in poor health and will abandon their homes and live on their own on the city streets threatened by violence and the process of administration. Different values and codes resulting from poverty and adolescents and households headed by a single woman will give rise to a nature of aggressiveness and solidarity of expectations and frustrations. The signs of what Mr. Hardoy has observed are already visible in Indian cities. The phenomenon of urban poverty has altered the landscape the social fabric and the overall character of Indian cities.

There are two main groups of strategies through which the poor can achieve a change in their conditions of poverty. First some strategies are carried out by the poor in an attempt to change their poverty in terms of their resources and aspects. Secondly there are strategies through in terms of their or those representing the poor seeking to secure their interests by effecting change in the actions and policies of others and in particular bringing about change in public policy and in its implementation.

The former is analyzed in terms of the coping strategies of the poor. It is usually based upon individual or local groups of poor seeking ways to offset the economic disadvantages they face by exploiting opportunities to utilize the resources and assets they possess or can access. Migration grassroots production cooperatives loans from relatives or credit association's diversification of production and entering new labor markets are some examples.

The second group of strategies is characterized by the need to change the policies and practices of others to bring about change. In particular it is directed at

achieving a redistribution of resources to change the poverty condition. Here, an important focus is on effecting institutional change in terms of the formulation and implementation of policies. In terms of resources, this represents an attempt to change the basis upon which existing resources are distributed and utilized within the locality and upon which new resources might be introduced into the locality and distributed. The discussion of poverty reduction thereby becomes one of mobilization, organization representation and empowerment.

A distinction between poverty alleviation and poverty reduction therefore becomes very pertinent. While the former concentrates on those assets and resources that have a bearing on the livelihood of the poor, the latter focuses on knowledge. In India's development strategy removal of poverty became a dominant objective in the year plan (1974-79). The earlier plans mentioned the existence of large-scale poverty in the country but there was no proper analysis of the dimensions of the problem. The fifth plan noted that the consumption levels of the bottom 30 percent of the country's population with their share of only 13.46 percent of the total private consumption remained far below the minimum per capita per month required to stay just above the poverty line.

It however made no distinction between rural and urban poverty. It stressed the need to raise the share of the bottom 30 percent. It suggested to the economic growth processes and national-level programs such as the minimum needs programme public procurement and distribution of essential goods.

The sixth five-year plan (1980-85) started a more definite approach to poverty issues in the country. It observed that the growth process was not enough for the removal of poverty. Specific policy measures were needed to influence the composition of output in favor of mass consumption goods. It observed that nearly 51 percent of the rural population and 41 percent of the urban population were living below the poverty line in 1979-80. Different programs were suggested for urban areas and rural areas to reduce each of the above-mentioned percentages to 30. But characteristically, the sixth plan showed a distinct bias towards rural poverty by implementing various rural poverty alleviation programs.

The Seventh-year plan (1985-90) constitutes the first conscious attempt to address urban poverty issues directly. It observes that the president's migration from rural areas has led to the rapid growth of slums in many urban settlements. This has led to overcrowding in relatively unskilled and low-paid jobs in the informal sector. The problem of urban poverty requires a major thrust towards employment generation and skill formation.

During the Eighth year plan (1992-97) further convergence of various programs has been sought under the name of urban basic services for the poor. This has been described as the most important component of the urban poverty alleviation program me to be converged at the local level with other programs such as environmental improvement of urban slums, low-cost sanitation and rozgar Yojana.

During the Ninth five-year plan (1997-2002) emphasis has been given to urban poverty alleviation programmes. Employment generation, women empowerment, and micro planning have been given adequate importance in the plan period. Swarna Jayanthi Rojgar Yojana is a program me designed exclusively for the upliftment of the urban poor and night shelter for footpath dwellers is another program formulated for the assistance of the urban poor.

In the Tenth year plan (2002-2007) emphasis has been given to continuing the earlier urban poverty alleviation program with zeal and enthusiasm and no specific urban poverty alleviation programs have been designed. From the era of the Fifth Plan there has been a perceptible change in the approach to urban poverty issues in India. From a welfare and service-oriented strategy there has been a shift towards poverty alleviation through expansion of employment opportunities and raising of the productivity levels of those engaged in jobs with low productivity.

The National Commission on Urbanization has classified the urban poverty alleviation programs are shelter and physical environment-related programmes, Nutrition supplement programs including public distribution, Programmes for employment generation, Programmes for the development of citizen participation and development of institutional capabilities of service agencies. At the outset it may be submitted that urban poor did not receive attention in the early stages of planning for the simple reason that urban poverty was looked upon as the spillover impact of rural poverty. Therefore the strategy followed for alleviating urban poverty was the alleviation of rural poverty itself. However as the rural poor migrated to urban areas in large numbers and as a result as the urban population increased resulting in the slumming of the towns and cities the policy maker woke up to the realities.

Programs were formulated to alleviate urban poverty too. However, since practically no statistical and other data were available about the size and distribution relating to urban poor in the early stages the urban poor were identified and equated with slum dwellers. Since slum dwellers were looked upon as the constituents of the urban poor, housing was perceived to be their main problem.

Therefore, the first strategy was to remove slums and to rehouse the slum dwellers. However, from the 70's onwards there was a shift in approach to urban

poverty removal and that shift took from improvement of slums to the strategy of removal of slums. Therefore, the fact was accepted that the slum would stay on and therefore what is expected to be done is improvement of slums and provision of slums and provision of necessary social services to the slum dwellers.

The shift in the policy thrust resulted in a number of urban poverty alleviation programs being formulated. These Programmes were slum improvement Programmes sites and services Programmes urban community development programs, integrated child development programs, programs of urban basic service, self-employment programs for the urban poor, and Nehru Rojgar Yojana. In addition an integrated view has now been taken for the alleviation of urban poverty by developing a package of Programmes like the Nehru Rojgar Yojana. The scheme of urban basic services for the poor, Environmental improvement of urban slums, Swarna Jayanthi Shari Rojgar Yojana, Low-cost sanitation and night shelter for footpath dwellers and so on.

Strategies and Programs for urban poverty alleviation reveal a couple of points. Firstly there is a shift in emphasis from growth as an instrument of poverty alleviation to a target group approach wherein a deliberate attempt is made by the state to alleviate poverty among specific groups by formulating appropriate programs. Secondly, given the target group approach to poverty alleviation there is a shift, May, diversification in the intervention – this shift is from merely providing income earning self and wage employment opportunities which seek to raise the poor above the poverty line. It is also intended to provide basic minimum needs so that the quality of life of the poor is upgraded.

The thrust of these urban poverty alleviation programs is to affect the maximum dent on poverty so that given the resources the largest number of the poor are benefited and to each of the beneficiaries maximum benefits are reached. The achievement of this goal is dependent on how best the poverty alleviation programs are designed and managed.

The Ministry of Urban Development and the Ministry of Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation were merged and renamed the Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation with effect from May 27, 2000. The ministry has two departments namely the Department of Urban Development and the Department of Urban Employment and Alleviation. The latter department is entrusted with the responsibility of policy formulation and monitoring of programs in the areas of housing and urban poverty alleviation.

These are essentially state subjects and the Department of Employment urban poverty alleviation plays a facilitating role and also supports programs through centrally sponsored schemes, institutions finance and technical advice.

The administration of urban poverty alleviation policies and programs leaves much to be desired. Alleviation of poverty is not a single department. It has become an orientation for all development departments so that each project, which is accepted, and every outlay, which is provided, is examined in the light of what it means for both urban and rural poor. The role of the nodal organ is to provide a common framework for the realization of all sectorial initiatives. At the national level, the Ministry of urban development and poverty alleviation has been set up to monitor the implementation of the various programs.

At the state level, the directorate of urban development has been set up to coordinate the service of the alleviation of urban poverty.

Another agency known as the state urban development agency under the control of the project director has been set up, especially to monitor and implement the SJSRY. Similarly at the district level. Urban poverty alleviation programs have been entrusted to district urban development agencies. The central and State Governments initiated a series of Programmes with a view to mitigate the problems of unemployment, poverty and income inequality. The focus of these Programmes particularly relating to poverty was rural poverty.

The implicit assumption behind these Programmes was that urban poverty is spillover of rural poverty. Therefore, by tackling rural poverty urban poverty would automatically be tackled. However the empirical evidence has revealed that though urban poverty has its linkages with rural poverty but gradually it acquires separate Programmes that for rural poverty. The central government and state governments have initiated a host of programs to alleviate urban poverty.

In the state of Punjab till November 1997, the following programs were progress, Nehru Rojgar Yojana, Urban Basic Service for the poor, Integrated development of small and medium towns, Environmental improvement of urban scheme and Prime Minister Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Programme .On December 1, 1997 these Programmes barring EIUS were replaced by a new program known as The Saran Jayanthi Shari Rojgar Yojana.

It is estimated that one billion poor people live without adequate shelter and basic services in slums and squatter settlements. With over half of humanity now living in cities and towns the challenge of the urban millennium is to improve the living environment of the poor. In India over 30 percent of the total population lives below the poverty line Such a high degree of urban poverty highlights a serious dimension of the country's urban scenario.

The insufficient employment opportunities and inadequate income among a considerable segment of the urban population have given rise to urban poverty.

This is despite the fact that the new opportunities and possibilities that the cities present are due to the development process, which has been brought through urbanization. The miserable economic plight does not allow the urban poor to live in authorized residential areas and compel them to stay in slums, in big cities the slums are rapidly proliferating which shows the magnitude of urban poverty. Therefore, urban poverty in India is reflected not only in the lack of productive employment, but also in inadequate living conditions and degraded environment.

To alleviate the urban poverty in the country the government of India had launched a number of slum improvement and urban poverty alleviation programs (UPAPs). Some of these programs are the Environmental Improvement of urban slums (EIUS), integrated development of small and medium towns, urban basic service for the poor, Nehru Rojgar Yojana (NRY), Prime Minister's integrated urban poverty eradication program and Swarna Jayanthi Shahari Rojgar Yojana. UBSP, NRY and PMIUPEP later on we merged into SJSRY with effect from 1st December 1997. These programs are based on the recognition of the potential contribution that the urban poor are capable of making in society and the alarming proportion they are going to assume in the future.

NRY was a centrally sponsored scheme designed for persons living below the poverty line in the urban areas. it was launched in October 1989.

In this scheme urban poor belonging to the Scheduled Caste and scheduled tribes categories were given special treatment in the form of earmarking of funds for them. NRY encompasses three schemes namely. The scheme of urban micro-enterprises, the scheme of urban wage employment, the scheme of housing and shelter up-gradation

They aimed to encourage unemployed and under-employed youth in the urban areas to adopt self-employment occupations. The scheme intended to have 30 percent of beneficiaries as women. The scheme had to the eighth five-year plan (1992-97) 25 percent of the project cost was a subsidy component subject to a ceiling of Rs.5000/-for the SCs and STs and women, and Rs:4000/-for others. In the case of loan the upper limit was Rs-30,000/-percent .Loans were to be raised from banks. The upgradation of technical and commercial skills of the beneficiaries was the aim of the training component.

The infrastructural component aimed to provide common facility centers, job centers,marketing etc. For training and infrastructural facilities 30 percent of the funds were earmarked. Earlier the sharing of subsidy between Central and State Governments was in the ratio of 50:50. During the Eighth plan period, the expenditure under this scheme was shared in the ratio of 60:40.

The main objective of this scheme was to provide wage employment to the urban poor by creating socially and economically useful aspects in the low-income neighborhoods in towns with a population below one lakh. Activities such as community center common work shed common selling places for the poor paving of lanes low-cost water supply, constructions of drains and sewers, pay and use of community baths cum latrines and children's ponds were taken up under this scheme. The material labor ratio was proposed to be 60:40. Statutory minimum wages and market wages are to be paid to unskilled and skilled workers respectively.

This scheme was designed to employ persons to persons who were engaged in housing and building activities. Training and subsidy and cum loan assistance are the two variants of this scheme. The training variant aimed for the skill up gradation of masons carpenters plumbers sanitary workers electricians and others engaged in construction trades.

Provision of infrastructure support for common facilities to beneficiaries and machine equipment to a population between 1 lakh and 20 lakh were covered under this scheme. HUDCO provided institutional finance for this scheme and also monitored it the central and state government's shared subsidy in the ratio of 60:40.

The aim of this scheme was the universalization of urban basic services for the urban poor. The aim is intended to be realized through the community participation and convergence of inputs from sectorial services of health, education and welfare. This scheme was launched in 1979-8- to provide infrastructure and other essential facilities in small and medium tones so that these towns as centers of additional job opportunities and hence the pace of rural-urban and urban-urban migration could be slowed down.

During the Eighth Five-Year Plan a re-orientation in approach to the development of towns was introduced by integrating employment generation Programmes and supportive infrastructure development programs. Towns having a population between 20,000 to 3 lakh were covered under this scheme. Central assistance was available for activities such as strengthening of link road facilities, construction of bus terminals provision of market yards, industrial sheds water supply, construction of road and side drains provisions of tourist facilities and localized drainage works.

In 1974, this scheme was introduced as an integral part of the minimum needs program and shifted to the state sector. The scheme was designed to provide basic amenities like water supply, sewerage through open drains storm water drains, street lighting, community baths and latrines, and widening and paving of existing loans and pathways to the residents of notified urban slums.

The government of India based on past experience realized that the state governments have not been providing sufficient funds for EIUS and thus, this scheme has not succeeded in delivering the expected results. This scheme is implemented in all the states and union territories having urban populations. Under this scheme, funds are allocated to the states as per slum population in the urban areas.

Prime Minister's Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Programme, this scheme was announced on 15th August 1994 and formerly launched mid-November 1995. The scheme aimed to alleviate urban poverty through an integrated approach of having a planned strategy for converging the inputs originating from various sectorial Programmes of the central and state governments. This scheme applied to class III urban agglomerations. The components of the scheme were Self-employment through setting up micro-enterprises and skill development, Environmental improvement through basic physical amenities, Shelter up-gradation and Community organization and empowerment.

The policy and Programmes under SJSRY, at the national level are steered by the ministry of urban development and poverty alleviation. Within this ministry the department of urban employment and poverty alleviation is the nodal department and administers the poverty alleviation Programmes at the national level. State urban development agency and district urban development agency.

The SJSRY comprises two types of Programmes are, the urban self-employment program and the urban wage employment program. In the Indian economy employment in the corporate sector including the government sector has either stagnated or has shown a marginal increase in the recent past. In the absence of expanding employment opportunities In the organized sector it becomes essential to have a program aiming to create to assets for generating self-employment for the poor on a sustained basis.

Urban Wage Employment Programme Keeping in view the distressed conditions of the urban poor the government of India has formulated a direct wage employment program, namely, the urban employment program. The objective of UWEP is to provide direct wage employment opportunities to the local laborers for the construction of society and economically useful community assets.

Despite the elaborate programs undertaken by the center state and local governments the desired results in pursuance of their policies to eradicate poverty in the urban areas have not been achieved for the reasons are, there has been a dominance of the central government in initiating and planning these Programmes as is reflected in the centrally sponsored schemes and flexibility at the local level.

The responsibility is diffused in accountability for the achievement of urban development schemes at the district level.

There is no single agency within the planning commission at the central level also at the state level, that integrates the various Programmes to form coordination on the whole. The eradication of poverty is a millennium challenge for the development of the world. The choice of policy to remove the scourge of poverty requires an understanding of its various dimensions. Economists from the classical era to the present have debated this phenomenon and there is a wide variation of perspectives among the economists and policymakers on the issues related to the elimination of poverty.

The measures which can sustainability contribute to the success of urban anti-poverty Programmes should include the decentralized planning as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru the architect of the planning process in our country, had rightly emphasized the significance of the grass-root level intuitions and for channelizing the peoples energy not only for plan but also plan formulation, greater devolution of authority for poverty removal at the district and sub-divisional level, evolving a suitable administrative machinery with simpler procedure to avoid middlemen and corrupt practices the highest standard of devotion, efficiency and integrity for the bureaucracy at the both higher and lower level.

The government should declare a war on poverty as it has declared a war on terrorism and resolved to finish it once and for all. Poverty in urban areas in our country is a great vice and needs to be eliminated to preserve the beauty of our cities like Chandigarh, which was declared as the city beautiful but has come to lose the beauty of the slums which have come up in its various locations

The state governments concerned should make all-out efforts to rejuvenate theory urban areas and make them slum-free. The Haryana government has resolved to make Panchakula a slum-free city by rehabilitating the slum dwellers in a site specially earmarked for them. Improvement of slums and removing them constitutes the main step to alleviating urban poverty.

There is a need to have a clear and appropriate definition of the project beneficiary development of cost-effective system for the identification of the target groups, there is a need to evolve a conducive policy environment by the authorities to enforce loan recovery and collection of user charges which calls for some degree of political will and clout on the part of the government. This is an important requirement in the present context when everyone lives with the wrong hope of getting a free meal and loan waiver.

The sustained impact of poverty alleviation projects is felt only when the asset created is properly maintained and the asset given is retained by the beneficiary. Experience indicates that in several cases assets are not retained by the beneficiaries for various reasons. Beneficiary identification is a crucial stage in targeting benefits therefore a good deal of attention must be bestowed by the policy maker on the issue of defining the poor household.

In poverty alleviation programs infrastructure improvements should be given top priority as it improve the quality of life of the poor. In view of large number of people still below the poverty line creation of employment opportunities should be the priority for policymakers while designing the urban alleviation Programmes.

The surety of the various social indicators points out to the need for an increase in investment in the social sector so that an effective dent is made in human deprivations and impoverishments. Political interference in the implementation of urban poverty alleviation programs should be curtailed. Especially the intervention of the ruling party leaders creates problems for the implementing agencies and the very objective of the programme is divided and real beneficiaries are violated.

Conclusion

Realizing the vitality of urban poverty, the government of India has introduced several urban poverty alleviation Programmes in the country with an aim to improve the socio-economic conditions of slum people and to improve the physical environment of slum areas. During the coverage, deficiencies have been noticed. To overcome such deficiencies certain suggestions have been offered like strict identification of real targeted people, strict vigilance on the recovery of bank loans to ensure the peoples participation in the execution of UPA Programmes, and infrastructure improvement should be given top priority as it improves the quality of life of people.

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